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**Supana Onikage**

**Illustrator: Youta**

# *Lazy Dungeon Master*



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"ALRIIIGHT!  
LET'S  
GET TO  
DRINKING,  
KEIMAAA!"

"STOP!  
DRINKING!  
YOU'RE COMING  
WITH ME."

Dungeon Core Number 695

ROKUKO

Dungeon Master

KEIMA MASUDA

GOREN'S  
FIRST WEDDING



Neighbor's Daughter  
**IGNI**

**"REALLY?!  
THEY LOOK  
STRONG?!  
YOU'RE SO RIGHT,  
DRAGONS ARE  
SUPER STRONG  
AND COOL!"**

**"YEAH,  
DRAGON  
BEETS  
ARE WAY  
MORE COOL.  
THEY LOOK  
STRONG AND  
EVERYTHING."**

Hero of Debt  
**WATARU**



"UWOOOOOOOOOH!"

"GAAHAHAHA!  
COME AT ME,  
LITTLE ONE!  
SHOW ME YOUR  
POWEEER!"

DRAGONS - A PROUD SPECIES  
KNOWN TO BE THE STRONGEST  
IN THE LANDS.

# CONTENTS

Prologue

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Side Chapter  
A Thief Named Tieff

Chapter 3

Epilogue

**Extra Episode:**  
The Game of Dragon Life





# Prologue

Dragons. The proud species known to be the strongest in the lands. Their enormous bodies were guarded by scales, a majestic pair of wings, and sharp claws. Their heads were adorned with splendid horns, and from their mouths they could breathe deadly attack magic in the form of fire and more. Their lifespans were long with a life expectancy of five hundred years at the bare minimum, and young dragons were treated as children until they were two or three decades old. Some even had a third horn growing from their nose.

On top of all that, they had distinct physical traits based on their unique elements.

Earth Dragons had small wings that did not afford them flight. Their scales were the color of mud and some wore rocks like armor (some theorized that their skin was made of rock).

Water Dragons could function superbly within water. Their legs regressed while their arms and tails morphed to act like fish fins. Their scales were blue and they sometimes flew through the skies to find other bodies of water.

Wind Dragons had green scales. They generally stayed in the sky. They loved flying and many of them had feathery wings like birds. When they rested, they did so in forests.

Fire Dragons had fiery red scales. They tended to be aggressive and violent, with self-centered personalities. In terms of attack power their fiery breath was the strongest of all the elemental breaths. They were attracted to volcanoes and bathed in magma.

Dragons could be classified further based on elemental mixing and purity, but generally all dragons fit into the four

main elements. There were in fact exceptions in the form of Light and Darkness Dragons, but they were extremely rare. Historically, the only Light Dragon known to exist was the Ivory Goddess's emissary, and the only Darkness Dragon known to exist was the legendary Dragon King. No human being had ever seen the Dragon King in the flesh. He supposedly lived on the bottom floor of the [Dragon Ravine] dungeon, but no adventurer who had entered the bottom floor had ever returned alive.

As an aside, Lesser Dragons did not know how to speak, but True Dragons could. Information about the Darkness Dragon had come entirely from dragons who could speak.

"Fwaaah, so bored..." Which brings us to today. A lone dragon, yawning as it went, flew far above a certain field in the Laverio Empire. It had such a high purity of mana that its red scales were wreathed as if by fire. It was a higher class of Fire Dragon known as a Flame Dragon. Although young for a dragon, it was over three hundred years old.

This dragon, born in the [Dragon Ravine], had departed on a journey to expand its horizons. However, perhaps due to being a dragon, or perhaps due to its own personality... it hadn't found much success.

"Everything looks the same from way up here. It's boring. Oh, wait, maybe I should try going down?" It doubted that there would be any strong warriors in a random field like this, but the ground was better than the empty sky. In the sky, even Rock Birds avoided dragons to the best of their ability.

*...I'll chomp on any Lesser Dragons if I find one*, it thought as it looked down, quickly finding a paved road in the plains. And luckily enough, there were human vehicles on it — carriages being drawn by horses.

The dragon's instincts reared its head. Fire Dragons had the most dangerous personalities. The aggressive, violent, and self-centered dragon looked at the carriages with a grin.

Disaster flew down from the sky. At first it was so high as

to be invisible from the ground, but as it approached the road, panic ensued.

“Gaaah! Hahahaha!” Roars that sounded like laughter. The carriages pulled back and tried to flee the way they came. Some of the carriages had horses that went into such a craze they couldn’t be controlled. The crimson dragon swooped down lazily, aiming for one of those carriages.

“Graaahaw, grahaahaaw!” It cackled as it crushed a carriage with its enormous body, enveloped by fire. The air filled with the smell of burning wood.

It was obvious the dragon wasn’t attacking for food. If it was, it wouldn’t have let the horses flee, as they were the best source of food for a dragon the carriages had. Though that wouldn’t matter if the dragon was a gourmand with a taste for human flesh.

The dragon flipped the carriage like one might flip a building block, then stomped on it — crushing it to bits. The wooden carriage had no chance of holding a dragon’s weight.

“Ah, aaaah...!” The merchant who owned the destroyed carriage let out a pitiful shriek. But that was the reaction most would have to a dragon. Meeting one meant death for most humans. All they could do was pray that the whims of fate allowed them to survive what amounted to a natural disaster with intelligence.

Indeed, the man didn’t even think about drawing his sword and attempting to slay the dragon. Only a trapped rat so terrified by fear that they lost their mind would attempt that. A fool with nothing to lose. Or, alternatively —

“Stop right there, dragon. You’re not gonna get away with this while I’m around.”

— the rare individual that possessed the spirit of a legend. And indeed, this man was called Wataru the Hero.

Wataru pointed his blade at the dragon, but was met with a derisive snort. *What could a human do?* thought the dragon. *What could a weak creature that can’t even live a*

*hundred years hope to do?*

Some stories did begin with the slaying of a dragon. But those were generally dragons that didn't speak — Lesser Dragons. Talking dragons were reserved for the role of giving advice to sages and heroes.

"S-Sir Wataru!"

"Good to see you're alright. But you better get outta here fast if you wanna live."

"R-Right!" The merchant gave Wataru a quick bow of his head, then dashed off without a single glance back. The dragon didn't even look at the sweating, fleeing merchant. It was grinning a nasty grin, perhaps interested in Wataru now. Just facing the dragon was enough to hit Wataru with a wave of pressure.

"...That's some dense fire mana. This might actually be a bit much for me to take on alone..." He spoke as if he could easily win with a helper or two. The dragon grimaced, its pride hurt. A human couldn't recognize the expressions of a dragon, though. That was just how rare it was for humans to face them.

Still, Wataru could sense what the dragon was feeling. A casual lust for murder, an intention to kill because why not. It was the kind of arrogant feeling born from true strength. And it was the signal that began their fight.

The dragon sucked in air. Wataru, understanding that to be a buildup to fire breath, dashed into sword range of the dragon — and since the dragon was walking on four legs, that meant its neck. Wataru swung his blade with deadly precision, aiming to cut off its head with one swing.

The dragon, sensing grim danger from the Hero's strike, twisted to avoid being hit. The dodge was more nimble than one would expect from a creature its size. But the tip of the blade still nicked the scales, cutting a small wound into the dragon's neck.

"...Gr!" The battle continued for ten short seconds. The dragon had to focus on evasion, with no time to let out its

breath. That was to be expected. Wataru's slice had left only a small flesh wound, but it was a wound the dragon hadn't anticipated at all. It flapped its firebound wings to get some distance.

"You shouldn't look down on humans too much. Wanna keep going?"

"....." The dragon glared at Wataru. Fire flared from its scales, making it look like a ball of fire. Wataru glared back at the dragon without fear, leading to more eruptions of fire.

The tense showdown was ultimately cut short by the dragon. It spread its wings and flew off into the sky. Wataru let out a sigh of relief. He had driven it away.

"Yeah, that wasn't easy. Looks like I've still got a long way to go." Wataru sheathed his sword and looked in the direction the dragon had flown off to.

"That's where Tsia is... and Goren. Are they gonna be okay?" Wataru gazed at the horizon for a good while, but he couldn't keep it up forever. He had to think about what to do about the destroyed carriage and the merchant, who was returning after seeing that the dragon had left.

□ □ □

By coincidence, on that very same day, Rokuko was having a discussion with Redra in Tsia Mountain's [Flame Caverns]. Rokuko was the human type avatar of the [Cave of Greed]'s Dungeon Core, whereas Redra was a Red Dragon and the Dungeon Master of the [Flame Caverns]. What could these two ladies be talking about, you ask?

"This 'green tea' stuff's bitter as crap! But it's got a nice aftertaste, I like it!"

"Right? I had Kinue teach me how to make it. The trick is to warm it slowly at sixty degrees to bring out all the flavor."

"Huh! That explains why it's so cold!"

"Mmm, sixty degrees is pretty hot for humans, you know." They were having a tea party. Not only that, but for

Rokuko's sake Redra had morphed into human form, which left her with a huge tail and horns that made their peaceful tea party look pretty silly. The red scales on her tail were evidence of her elemental heritage.

Plus, Rokuko didn't seem to have any fear, awe, or hostility for the dragon. The reason being, they were friends, and Rokuko had something she wanted to tell people no matter who they were.

"B-By the way! Listen to this, Redra! Keima was like! H-He said, 'Rokuko belongs to me'!"

"Oooh?! That stubborn punk's finally made his move?!" It was love talk. "So, how'd it go?! How was your first time?!"

"Well, it haaasn't really gotten any further than that..."

"Dang! That's annoying. Why won't he just get to baby-making already?"

"....." Rokuko suddenly fell silent. Redra grunted, urging her to speak. "Um, well."

"Yeah?"

"Ichika, um, kissed Keima."

"Oof. Ichika's that slave, right? Is she the brown one? Or the one with big boobs?"

"Big boobs. Are they going to have babies now because of that...?"

Redra recalled how the slave named Ichika looked. In human terms, she had a very attractive body. And she was stronger than Rokuko. That pretty much sealed Rokuko's fate... or maybe not. He had said that Rokuko was his girl. Redra's brain could produce only one conclusion from the presented facts.

"This is a harem! Yaaaah, Keima's the kinda guy to beat my hubby in a fight! Course he'd make a harem! That's a man's dream! Not that my man ever would!"

"Oh, you think so? I thought the same thing. But Keima said he has his hands so full with me he doesn't want a harem at all...!"

*Love makes you blind, huh?* Redra chugged her tea. It was

sweet and calming.

"So, basically, I got worried and came to ask if Ichika and Keima are going to have a baby now."

"Huh? By kiss do you mean somethin' else?"

"Wha? No, a kiss is a kiss. Want to see?" asked Rokuko as she pulled up her monitor and put on the video she had prepared. She had copied the video before Keima deleted the original.

"Yup, this sure is a kiss! A pretty hardcore tongue kiss too! But uh, is that all?"

"That's it. Anyway, I heard you need milk to raise a baby, and milk comes from boobs, right? I wonder if some will come out of mine, too. I'm not so sure about it. No milk's ever come out before," said Rokuko while holding up her boobs and squeezing them. Redra thought they would definitely make a lot of milk when the time came.

"Milk doesn't come out till you make a baby, so if you want milk that much get to baby-making with Keima. But don't worry! A kiss alone's not enough to make a baby!"

"Wha? I thought you said kissing made babies."

For a second Redra had no idea what Rokuko was talking about, but then she remembered that she had escaped this conversation before with that excuse. "A kiss is just the beginning...!"

"What...?!"

"Kissing makes babies since it's the start of everything, but just a kiss isn't going to make a baby! And uhhh, look, Keima didn't initiate this kiss!" Redra desperately tried to recall exactly what she had said before as she spoke. She generally lived on momentum and energy, so most of the past was fuzzy for her.

"That's true, Ichika did start the kiss."

"Right. Everything'll be fine if you kill the slave!"

"Um, that's a bit much. I like Ichika, too." Rokuko naturally didn't intend to eliminate any of her allies that kept the dungeon running. "That's kinda weird, actually."

How can you jump to murder so fast, Redra? Isn't killing your friends scary?"

"Mmm, I feel like you're kinda weird yourself, but whatever. More tea!"

"Okay, okay." Rokuko poured more green tea into Redra's cup. Incidentally, the tea party had a firm rule that Redra was not to bring any of her own drinks. It would just be awkward for her to bring a steaming glass of magma that Rokuko couldn't drink at all.

"If just a kiss won't make babies, what should I do? I feel like you tricked me here, to be honest."

"Guh?! W-Well, uh! Why don't you try promising to be a couple?!"

"Will a promise really change anything?"

"Like, with a ceremony! A vow and a ceremony!" A ceremony. Or to be more precise, a wedding ceremony where a couple exchanged vows to become married.

"You mean like a wedding ceremony...?"

"Huh? Uh, yeah!"

A wedding ceremony. Rokuko had heard about them from Wataru and some others. You gathered a lot of people and performed a wedding vow on a large scale. There was even a wedding day kiss to top off the marriage. *Oh, so that's why a kiss is the start of baby-making.*

"Well, you can think about all this once the baby's made!"

"That's true. Oh, Redra, want to try some cooked marshmallow?"

"Cooked marshmallow...?" Rokuko changed the topic out of nowhere, but Redra didn't notice. She was focused on learning about whatever a marshmallow was. "What's that? Sounds pretty good!"

"Uh-huh, it does sound good. And it is! Which is why I brought some!" Rokuko set a plate with huge marshmallows onto the table. It was something from another world that she had bought with DP. She had selected the jumbo-sized ones, because why not? They were big enough to grab with your

hands.

“Whoa! So this is cooked marshmallow?”

“Actually, these marshmallows haven’t been cooked yet. Go ahead and try one. But not all of them! We’ll cook them after.”

Redra grabbed a marshmallow and tossed it into her mouth. She bit down hard, and sweetness spread through her mouth. There was a cute kind of squishiness to it. It didn’t feel as satisfying to Redra as meat, but... it was basically candy! So alright!

“Now that was good! Didn’t even need to be cooked!”

“Hahaha. True, Redra, but they’re even better when cooked. They get all firm on the outside and melt on the inside when you cook them.”

“Makes sense! Let’s cook them! Right now!”

“Okay, wait just a second. I’ll get everything ready,” said Rokuko, just as she noticed that she had forgotten to bring sticks. But she soon thought of something to use in their place. The sword on her hips. It was a thin blade only there for show, and after unsheathing it she stabbed it through a bunch of marshmallows. She then pointed it toward Redra.

“Here, cook them.”

“...Rokuko, you know what it means to point a sword at a dragon, yeah?”

“What? It’s just for cooking them. Don’t you want to eat cooked marshmallows?”

She did.

“...Well, alright! We’re friends. So uh, just gotta do some light fire breathing?”

“Uh-huh. Just hold back so they don’t get put on fir— Ah!” Suddenly, Rokuko remembered. A famous bard’s tale began with the line, ‘Nobody points a sword at a dragon.’

“Only a trapped rat so terrified by fear that they’ve lost their mind would attempt that. A fool with nothing to lose. Or, alternatively—”

“— the rare individual that possessed the spirit of a

legend. Guess you did know that, Rokuko!" Redra grinned.

"I just remembered it. It's fine, we're friends."

"I dunno about friends pointing swords at each other!"

"Don't worry about it. Not like I could hurt you anyway. Plus, a legend like me doesn't even think about that kind thing."

"Legend? Don't you mean fool?" cackled Redra.

"Gahaha, you wicked dragon. Your fire breath's only good for cooking marshmallows!"

"Whaaat?! We'll see about that! Take this, weakened fire breath!" Redra played along and cooked the marshmallows with her fire. They were hard on the outside, melted on the inside, and totally delicious.

# Chapter 1

Okay. I used DP to fill up the holes that the Dungeon Eaters left, so that was fine. Really, almost everything was fine. But despite having just “finished” the dungeon, after all that it was hard to deny that it needed some improvements.

First, we needed to make a room built around defense. One that could fight off a Dungeon Eater no matter where it came in from. *But... wait. Would a room like that matter if the Dungeon Eater could go wherever it wants through the walls? Ehhh...*

A ton of time passed with me debating over what to do, so ultimately I just decided to make whatever clear improvements I could think of.

First came the old puzzle area. I had never fixed it after Rin had destroyed it, not even during my renovations earlier. Mainly because so many people were in the dungeon that it was hard to be stealthy about it. Sheesh. But conveniently, there wasn't anyone around right now. I could implement a gimmick that had occurred to me earlier.

That said, I wasn't going to implement any obstacles. I would add a small room next to the corridor, then claim I had found a hidden path to it. But I couldn't make it a big room since the [Flame Caverns] were so close. What purpose was there for the small room, then? Gathering DP.

Now, by gathering DP I didn't mean killing people. The small room was a simple [Jail]. Inside were a bunch of small jails fashioned as bathrooms that one or two people could enter. People going inside of them would have their DP income boosted by six times, due to the effects of both being locked up and being in a jail room.

Naturally, I would need people to go into the jails, and naturally, nobody would hang out in a suspicious side room for no reason. Thus, I would pay them. I would return some of their DP in the form of money and items. Only a small portion of it, though. The remainder would come to us in the form of profit, albeit not a whole lot.

A person earning fifty DP a day (that is, 50/DP) would earn 300 DP a day inside the jail. I could then easily pay them one silver a day, which was worth 100 DP. That would probably attract some people, since it was the equivalent of earning ten thousand yen for doing nothing but sitting around all day. *Actually... maybe I should lower it to fifty coppers, since they aren't doing anything? Might be smart to give extra at the start to draw people in.*

And so, I finished the fixes fast and brought Niku and Ichika to experiment. It was important to test it out ourselves first, mainly so we would have firsthand experience when reporting it to the guild and thereby avoid any unnecessary lies. Reporting it was necessary since nobody would use it if they didn't know how. No need to have a repeat of the tragedy caused by the Magic Blade testing room just to spread the word. *I sure put Uzou and Muzou through hell back then, and they even got me a Magic Blade afterwards. I'll need to give them VIP treatment if they ever come here again.*

*...Wait. I just remembered that they said they'd come to Goren as soon as they finished up their next job, and that was a long time ago. Maybe they died...? Well, no point thinking about it. Adventurers disappearing into thin air isn't anything new. If they're alive I'll just think of it as a winning gamble.*

Anyway, back on topic. I doubted anyone would manage to get themselves locked inside the room, but using it was a bit more complicated than the Magic Blade trap and nobody would bother without an explanation of how it worked. Which was why I needed to provide an explanation myself.

Luckily, everyone in town knew that I was Goren's foremost [Cave of Greed] expert. They would definitely believe any report I made on the dungeon. Definitely, for sure. Maybe.

"Niku, break this wall to pieces for me."

"Understood."

I went ahead and destroyed a wall to make an entrance to the DP room. That way, I could explain away not finding it until now by saying I hadn't thought there would be a room behind the wall. Surely no one would notice that I'd made the original room more narrow to compensate. *Okay, maybe it's a little obvious?*

"Whoa, there's totally a bunch of tiny rooms!" said Ichika, and indeed, a bunch of tiny rooms in the shape of bathroom stalls were lined up. Each were jails, and to protect privacy I used {Create Golem} boards to make solid doors and walls for each. Also, a red mark would appear on a door in use, but naturally they were all empty. They really were like toilet stalls. *There's some good design we have going here.*

Incidentally, I had marked the area as a Safe Zone to encourage the idea that people could relax here.

"Alright, let's try them out. Go into one of the stalls, Ichika. Niku and I will go into one ourselves."

"Understood."

"Roger dodger."

Niku and I went into the stall next to the one that Ichika had gone into. This would be a good time to test if we could talk through the walls, and how sound-proofed the walls were at all.

Inside the room were two hourglass timers embedded in the wall opposite the door, plus a dispenser that looked like it had come straight off a vending machine. The door would lock when the timer was set, unlock when it reached zero, and for emergency situations there was a button that would unlock the door. What a forgiving establishment. Just press the button and the door would open on the spot. With that clearly marked, nobody would end up starving to death in

one of these.

As for the dispenser, there was actually a corridor behind the rooms with money and items set at the ready. When the timer reached zero through natural means, something would drop down to the dispenser. There was no sensor that detected when a full day's worth of DP had been drained. Thus, Rei and other dungeon employees would need to camp in the hallway and distribute the rewards themselves. That said, each timer would last for twelve hours, so they only had to check the rooms twice a day. Money would be the most common form of payment with only the occasional item, which meant Register Golems could take care of most of the work.

Honestly, we had way more money than we knew what to do with thanks to the Tsia mountain tunnel and running the inn. We were saving a lot of it in the Guild, but honestly, we just weren't using it. We would convert it to DP if it wouldn't be a such a huge loss. Might as well use it when we can.

My plan this time was to relax for twenty-four hours as a test. I took the hourglasses out of the wall, flipped them, and put them back. They were small, but thanks to golem programming at the center each would last for twelve hours. And only one of them would drop a grain of sand at a time. Thus, the two of them together would keep going for twenty-four hours. If you wanted to extend the time you just had to flip a finished hourglass.

I had tried to make it as simple as possible since adventurers would probably get confused by anything too complex, but... well, we'll see what Ichika has to say.

I spread out my futon in the stall. The stall was just big enough for a futon to fit inside. Naturally, I'd done that on purpose.

"Alright, time for bed."

"R-Right."

And so I got into bed with Niku as my dakimakura, just like always. I could grab some food from {Storage} if I ever

got hungry, so I could sleep without any issues. Zzz...

□ □ □

*Crap, I forgot the actual toilets... this is a big flaw.* Naturally, Niku's suffering woke me up by the thirteen hour point. We managed to avoid interrupting the timer thanks to Rokuko withdrawing us, but a normal person would have had to endure for twenty-four hours with no bathroom. *Maybe I should throw in a pot with a Jelly inside? It'd be like peeing inside a bottle, except a pot... Ah, crap. Jellies are monsters, I can't put them in a Safe Zone. How am I gonna make a toilet like this? Should I just get rid of the Safe Zone...? That'd be better than not having toilets.*

Anyway, we managed to pass the twenty-four hours with a toilet break thrown in. Five silvers plopped down into the dispenser beneath the hourglasses right as the door unlocked. Seemed like that was working right. Incidentally, those silvers were all thanks to Niku. My DP income was 0/DP, after all.

That was that. I was interested in what an adventurer had to say about the stalls. I asked Ichika her thoughts after she left her stall, jingling coins in her hands.

"Guuuh. Morning, Master."

"Yep. Morning. So, what'd you think about the stall, teach?"

"Why teach...? Well, whatevs. The pay is pretty bad, I gotta say. I'd rather just go earn some cash myself than stay stuck in there."

She had immediately shot them down. Now that she mentioned it, anyone strong enough to beat the labyrinth area could just hunt Iron Golems and make more money that way.

"The pay's basically spare change, and being stuck in a small stall for that long is actually hella painful. Doing nothing all alone for twelve hours is just, oof. Twenty-four

hours is even worse.”

“...You know you can just sleep through it, right?”

“You’re the only one who could sleep that long, dude. Twelve hours is just too long. And you gotta leave the Safe Zone up, otherwise nobody’s gonna sleep inside a dungeon.”

*...Oh yeah. This place is basically like my home, but for everybody else it’s staying inside a dangerous dungeon where anything can happen for twelve hours. Nobody’s gonna sleep if not for the Safe Zone guarantee.*

“The toilet’s an issue too, I’d guess. ‘Cause I mean... Yeah?” I glanced at Niku and she was nodding hard.

“Now that’s small stuff. Just throw in a pot and let people use {Purification}.”

“Wait, that’s all I need to do? {Purification} sure is convenient.” *Honestly, {Purification} is the real cheat skill. It can even replace toilets. Now that’s impressive.*

“Though you’re gonna want ones with lids ‘cause eventually the smell is gonna stick in a bad way.”

“Right, thanks for the info. Anything else?”

Ichika put a finger on her chin and fell into thought.

“So like, the pay’s pretty bad, for sure. But it’d be worth it if there was some chance of getting a real bangin’ reward. Why not do that, uhhh, thing you did with Uzou and Muzou?”

“Oh? Use Golem Blades as bait, you mean?”

“Right, right. Just be like, ‘You can get a Magic Blade just by sitting around! Maybe!’ People’ll be all over it then. ‘Specially since you can trade Magic Blades for gold, yeah?’

*Oh yeah, even Wataru was going after Magic Blades to sell for money. Funny, since they’re basically free to make. {Create Golem} truly is an ungodly powerful spell.*

“Heh, Ichika. Looks like you’ve got some evil in your heart too, huh?”

“Not as much as you, Master.”

Ichika and I cackled together wickedly. Too many Magic

Blades would lower their market value, but they were in high enough demand that dispensing a few free ones here wouldn't be a problem. Not to mention that Golem Blades were perishable goods, just like normal swords. They would regenerate a little bit if you poured mana into the magic stone that served as their core, but they would eventually break. You would want two or three of them if possible. That was actually fairly standard for Magic Blades, so it wasn't a problem specific to Golem Blades.

"Oh, but the walls are thin and I could kinda hear everything? Like, uh, Niku's groaning and stuff."

"Aaah..."

Niku averted her eyes, embarrassed. *My bad. There'll be a toilet for you next time.*



And so, I reported the room to the Guild. The door would lock when the hourglasses were flipped, but pressing the button would unlock the door immediately. You would get silvers if you waited until the hourglasses ran out. One hourglass was twelve hours, whereas two were twenty-four hours. In total I was paid ten silvers for the information.

The next day, the guild put up an investigation quest and a bunch of adventurers went to check out the DP room with forms of entertainment in hand, taking turns staying inside. Their several days of investigation led to everyone safely understanding that if you waited half a day or a full day inside, you would get items and gold in return. There was even a lucky guy who got a Magic Blade. Of course, we gave him one on purpose, but he immediately bought food and went for a second try. What'd he get the second time? Twenty coppers.

With all that done, the room became known as the Inn of Greed. Apparently, a lot of people went inside just to sleep off most of the twelve hours. Thanks to the possibility of getting a Magic Blade without any significant risks, it ultimately became a place where a reasonable number of people stayed and earned us a reasonable amount of extra DP.



*So, let's put aside the dungeon for a second and talk about the town.*

Some townsfolk said they had something serious to discuss with the town chief, and so I ended up meeting them in the chief residence's parlor. I had no idea what they wanted to discuss with a town chief that never did anything, but alright.

The townsfolk were actually Hubb, an adventurer living in town, and Waife, a woman who worked as a traveling merchant. Apparently, they were childhood friends from a

town that had been wiped off the map, and by coincidence found each other again here in Goren.

"So basically, we decided to get married and came here right away."

*Oh, right, I remember hearing something about town chiefs getting the final say on marriages and stuff. "Hey, congratulations. Feel free to get married and do whatever else you want."*

"Th-Thank you!" They clasped their hands in excitement.

*Nice to see a happy couple... Wait. Actually, does this country have a census or anything? Do I need to keep track of family registers or something? Crap, I went ahead and gave them permission, but Wozma's the one actually taking care of all this work... and I don't really feel like going out of my way to tell him about this...*

"...Uhhh, Waife, was it? You said you were a traveling merchant, but are you gonna settle down in Goren after getting married? Or are you gonna keep traveling?"

"Erm... Are you trying to say I can't move here?"

"Huh? No, no. I'm just saying I won't stop you if you want to keep working. You must be pretty good at math if you're a merchant. Would be a shame for you not to use your talents. Of course, if you want to dedicate yourself to your family as a wife, that's fine, but I think you might stand to gain a lot from working at Dyne's."

"A-As a wife... Um, well, a-are you saying you'll introduce me to the Dyne Company?"

"Yeah? If you want me to, that is." Ichika was working at Dyne's store all the time, so yeah, they seemed pretty busy. No doubt they could use some extra help. A big store with lots of workers wouldn't have taken up shop in a tiny town like this. I might as well pay back the favor by sending some help their way.

"I would absolutely appreciate the introduction!"

"Sure. I dunno what kind of job they'll give you, but I'll put in a good word for you." I also didn't know how good of a

worker she was, but Dyne was a good guy. He'd take care of her.

"By the way, we're both Beddhists."

"Yeah?"

"We were thinking we'd like to have a Beddhist wedding ceremony, if something like that exists."

*...Oh yeah. Churches do that kinda thing too.* Coming of age ceremonies, weddings, burials, ancestral celebrations. From birth to death and beyond, churches intricately involved themselves in the daily lives of people to consolidate their power, increase their influence, and... Uh, moving on.

"Alright, you want a wedding ceremony... Uhhh, huh." I hadn't expected that at all. *A wedding ceremony, huh? Uhhh-huh.*

I envisioned the kind of Japanese wedding ceremony I was familiar with. *A church? A traditional Shinto shrine? The ancient practice of San San Kudo? Guess I'll have to spend some time thinking this through. Would probably be better just to have them give up on it.*

"Ehhh. Sorry, but Beddhism doesn't ha—"

"I heard everything!" Rokuko burst into the parlor with a kick hard enough to nearly rip the door off its hinges. *She was eavesdropping, huh?*

"U-Um, wh-who are you?" asked Waife timidly.

"Waife, that's the owner of the inn. She's also the town chief's wife."

"O-Oh, I see! Forgive my rudeness, Mrs. Town Chief!" Waife bowed her head after Hubb murmured into her ear. *Mrs. Town Chief, huh? You're looking pretty happy about that, Rokuko.*

"Eheh, good guy. That's right, I'm Keima's—"

"Actually, we're not married." *We're partners. Just partners.*

"Wha...? Really?" Hubb blinked.

"Don't play dumb, Keima. You were all about calling me

your woman and falling head over heels for me. I've got the proof inside of me." Rokuko puffed out her chest confidently. *That proof is the video you took of the Dungeon Eater incident with your menu, right? That's some manipulative framing, Rokuko. Who taught you to do that? Ichika?*

"I see... You're just not married yet."

"...Let's drop that subject. What'd you barge in here for, Rokuko?" When backed into a corner, change the topic. I ignored Hubb's comment and threw the ball into Rokuko's court.

"Oh, right. I was walking by and just happened to overhear the problem. You want to have a wedding ceremony, right?" Rokuko shot Hubb and Waife a smile.

"Uh, Rokuko? Eavesdropping is a pretty nosy thing to do."

"Who cares? These two need my help. But umm, what were your names again?"

"H-Hubb."

"I'm Waife."

The two introduced themselves to Rokuko.

"Okay, perfect. Hubb and Waife, don't worry! I'll make sure you two have a perfect wedding!" declared Rokuko with a smile.

"U-Uh, Rokuko. Shouldn't we talk about this fi—"

"The first wedding of the town... this deserves a whole gold coin of funding! If you don't have enough, I'll throw in some funding of my own!"

"Rokuko?! I don't think this is a good ide—"

"Thank you very much!"

Rokuko and the couple blew past all my protests and formed an agreement. *Come on. Listen to me. I'm the friggin town chief, y'know? At least talk to the town chief with the actual power before setting something like this up.*

Rokuko held a meeting to discuss the wedding ceremony. It was being held at the church at night. Rokuko, me, and the dungeon administrators were participating. A Succubus

without anything better to do was covering the inn's front desk for us. *We can only hold meetings like this at night thanks to running the cafeteria. Sheesh, and we Beddhists are supposed to be asleep at night. Aaand morning, and noon, if possible. Anyway, time to tell everyone why they're here.*

"At Rokuko's request, we're holding a wedding ceremony."

"Whoa! Finally decided to tie the knot, huh, Master?! High five!" clapped Ichika with a whistle.

"Congratulations," said Niku.

"Master, Rokuko, I wish you a happy marriage," said Rei.

"I will begin preparing a feast at once," said Kinue.

"Wooow! It's finally happeniiing!" said Neruneh.

"Congratulations, your Holiness! I believe it would be best if you expressed your love in a large-scale, sweaty, passionate display of—"

"Stop, stop, stop!" I hurriedly interrupted their celebration. Especially Suilla's. "Sorry, I should have been more clear. This isn't a wedding for Rokuko and I."

"Dude. I'm out. Later, everybody."

"That's too bad."

"See you tomorrow, everyone!"

"I'm glad I didn't start cooking yet."

"Awww. Daaarn."

"I wonder what my massage schedule for tomorrow looks like."

"Stop right there, everyone!" Rokuko snapped as everyone started walking off, all of their motivation completely gone. "This is going to be like a practice ceremony for my wedding with Keima! Okay? Understand? Are we on the same page now?"

"Say that a little faster, Rokuko! Get HYPE!"

"I'll do what I can."

"I will ensure the wedding goes off without a hitch!"

"Shall I bake a cake? One with several layers, at that?"

"Hypeeeee!"

"I'll certainly be looking forward to the ceremony."

*Seriously? What's with these jokers?* I looked at Rokuko, having already drawn my conclusions from their painfully obvious acting.

"C'mon, Rokuko. I know you planned this."

"Wh-What ever could you mean?"

"...Well, whatever. Anyway, we're holding a wedding at Rokuko's request." I repeated my opening line. There were no jokes this time. "Not really sure what weddings are like here, so uh, take it away, Ichika."

"Roger! Feels like it's a been a long time you've had to ask me about something like this. I'm gonna go all out, heck yeah!" Ichika coughed to clear her throat. "Town weddings are like, you report it to the town chief, then gather all your friends and go wild."

"Alright, so it's an excuse to go out drinking."

"Yup. There's not actually any standards for what to do or anything. At most a town might have some traditions for the drinking party. Like the man carrying the girl around, or them eating half of each other's food, stuff like that. Nobody really knows how this all started. It's just them trying to show off how close they are, really."

*Makes sense.* "So, we basically can just do whatever. Alright."

"Hold it, Keima," interjected Rokuko. "They asked for a Beddhist wedding this time. In other words, they want a religious ceremony. Maybe you should ask what they do over in the Ivory Church."

Ichika nodded at Rokuko's suggestion. "Yuppers. I figured you were gonna ask about that, so I did some research. This is more for city weddings, but they report to the church and do the ceremony inside of it. In Tsia, or I mean in the Empire, most people are gonna be in the Ivory Church. I dunno what the God of Light worshipers do in the Church of Lux."

"Huh. So city people do stuff in churches."

"Not like they can all meet the Archduke and get

permission individually, y'know?"

*I mean, here in Goren the Archduke pops up all the time, so that wouldn't be too much of a big deal. Guess he'd get annoyed if people started doing that for real though. There's all the paperwork for the family register and... Wait. I never asked if there's family registers here. Maybe there aren't.*  
"Alright, so what kinda wedding ceremonies do the Ivory Church hold?"

"Well, I dunno the exact details, but it kind of goes like..."

And so Ichika taught us all about Ivory Church wedding ceremonies, but uh... since Haku's passing herself off as the God of Adventurers and goes out of her way to get Heroes in her Empire, the Ivory Church's wedding is basically the same thing as a Christian wedding. Apparently in Wakoku they do more Japanese-style weddings. Just what I'd expect from a country made by a Japanese-loving Hero.

"A-A wedding kiss...! W-W-Wow, that's wild. And they do it in front of everyone?!"

"Is it that surprising, Rokuko?" asked Rei.

"W-Won't that make babies?!"

*Seriously, how many times have I told you that kisses don't ma— Actually, have I told her that? I guess not, since I don't want her to ask me how babies are actually made.*

"Seems like it all started with this thing called the love swap, where they, like, drank potions and pressed their mouths together to let their partner drink their potion, but an old Hero suggested that they just kiss instead, and so here we are."

*That's pretty high level compared to just swapping water or something.*

"Not surprised that they wear wedding dresses too. Who wouldn't want to dress up and look nice on their wedding day? But there's no giving rings, the husband just gives his wife a short sword."

"Yup, so they can protect their chastity when shit gets real. Dunno if you can really call suicide protecting anything,

but hey.”

“Holy crap! That’s dark! I-I mean, is that normal?” Apparently, a sharper blade showed that your love was stronger. Since it would hurt less when they killed themselves. *Yeah, this is dark as hell.*

“Normal for nobles, at least. Pretty sure commoners just use it for self-defense. Stab the bitch and all that.”

“Now that I can get behind.” I would definitely want Rokuko having something to defend herself with. ‘Cause Dungeon Masters die when their Dungeon Core dies, and I’m Rokuko’s Dungeon Master.

But that was enough about the Ivory Church for now.

“What does the Church of Lux do again?”

“They’re more about making vows to their god. They wear fancy armor, make oaths about what they’ll do to destroy dungeons, and then as a couple smash a white vase-thing made to look like a Dungeon Core.” For example, merchants would make vows like “I will support adventurers by...” or “By supporting my husband, I will...” and so on to show how they as a team will contribute to the war effort against dungeons. Them working as a team probably meant that Heroes (or in the Church of Lux’s case, the Soldiers of God who are actively working to destroy dungeons) had influenced the ceremony as well. *Yeah, I’m gonna ignore that ceremony too.*

“Lessee, what else. Couples who worship the Blacksmith God forge a sword together, couples who worship the Food God bake a cake together and eat it, and yeah. Most ceremonies are just all about the couple deepening their bond and stuff. The Dice God, uhhhh, I think they trade wallets with each other? Like, if they both have the same amount of money, there’s a good chance of them falling in love.”

“...Wait, they’re still gambling on whether they’ll fall in love at the wedding itself?”

“Hey, that’s the Dice God for you. What else would the

God of Gambling do? But really, they can just spill the beans to each other beforehand. Cheating's fair game, if you know what I mean."

Each religion had its own customs, but most ceremonies did involve the couple showing off how close they were to each other. The Food God was the former hero Ishidaka, so her ceremony was basically just the Ivory Church's but with a food twist. *Guess I should do something similar here.*

"Anyone else know of any wedding ceremonies from other churches?"

"Yes! For a Chaos God ceremony, th—"

"Lemme stop you right there, Suilla. I don't need to know about the Chaos God." The Chaos God was just Leona. Nothing good would come from anything to do with her.

"Um," began Niku. "Mai told me that the War God's ceremony is performing blade dances."

"Oh, this the first time I'm hearing of the War God. But blade dances, huh...? Guess that's just singing and dancing, but with swords." *I guess Niku and Maiodore are talking about weddings, then. I'm glad Niku finally has a girlfriend her age.*

"Wataru said that in Mountain God and Sea God ceremonies you offer up wiiiine."

"...You know he's a big deal Hero, right?"

"Wataru the Hero saiiid."

*Neruneh and Wataru are talking about wedding ceremonies too, huh...? It must have been about the wine. Yeah, the wine. I feel like with Beddhism there'd be a problem with who drinks the wine. I sure won't drink it. Maybe I can just pass it all over to the Ivory Church.*

"...Wait. Is there no church for the Dark God?"

"Huh? Dude, now that you mention it, I dunno. I've never heard of any Dark Church. The Dark God himself is totally famous though."

*Really? Huh. Strange, considering the Light God's Church of Lux is such a large-scale operation. Though I guess it's*

*not really a big deal since the Ivory Church is basically serving the Dark God.*

Anyway, I had heard all about the wedding ceremonies of different churches. It was finally time to devise a Beddhist wedding ceremony. I asked for opinions and Suilla immediately raised her hand.

“Yes, yes! Please add Succubus traditions to the wedding ceremony! It all begins with everyone taking off their clothes.”

“No. What’s even the point of everyone taking off their clothes?”

“Isn’t it obvious? I’m sure you know what would come next. Ohoho.”

“No details, please.” *Wait, do Succubi even have men? Do they marry Incubi or something?*

“Oh, we Succubi just do it with each other. Our tails are surprisingly convenient for this kind of thing. We can just—”

“No details, please.” Calling on Suilla was probably a mistake. Though to be fair, she was basically in charge of the church as head nun.

“...By the way, dude, in some cultures the town chief has to pop the bride’s cherry if you catch my drift. You gonna get in on that?”

“Absolutely not.” *Not you too, Ichika...* “Anyway, I think we’re gonna base our ceremony off the Ivory Church’s too.” The Beddhist Church was structurally similar to Ishidaka the Hero’s Food Church in origin. *Should be safe to just copy what they did, more or less. I can get behind a couple feeding each other the first bite of the wedding cake.* “But I kinda feel that giving a short sword is a bit too violent for Beddhism, so uh, I’m gonna change that. How does trading rings sound?”

“Trading rings, hm?” said Rokuko. “That’s what you do in your original world. Wataru told me about it, and honestly, I think it sounds pretty good. What could be better than couples giving each other rings?”

“.....” The ruby-set orichalcum ring on Rokuko’s left hand gleamed in the light. Incidentally, I had the Succubus ring on my left hand. *Okay, don’t take this the wrong way. I use the ring finger on my non-dominant hand the least, so that’s the best place to put a ring. This Succubus ring has a magic stone stuck in it, so it’s pretty bulky, alright?*

“Rokuko, girl, I hate to say it, but rings prolly aren’t gonna work. A ton of Beddhists are adventurers and we hella don’t wear rings. They’d totally mess with our hands and stuff. I’d say we should just stick with trading holy symbol necklaces.”

*Fantastic work, Ichika!* “Yeah! Man, trading holy symbols would be perfect! Nothing more Beddhist than a Beddhist holy symbol!”

“If a Beddhist theme is a concern, might I suggest trading pillows?”

*Oh, Rei’s got some good ideas too. Yeah, pillows. Not bad.*

“...Maybe they could sleep with the same dakimakura.”

*Interesting. Exactly the kind of observation that only Niku the dakimakura would make. It fits both the couple doing something together and sharing the same object.*

“Niku,” said Kinue, “Are you just saying that because you would like Master and Rokuko to sleep with you at the same time? I imagine that would be splendid, but now is not the time to be self-centered.”

“...You’re sharp, Kinue,” replied Niku with a kinda pouty tone.

“Oh, oh, I know! How about the husband gives the wife a lot of melon rolls!” Rokuko shot her hand up, but that was even more self-centered than what Niku wanted. “A whole room of melon rolls... and they can eat as many as they like. Perfect, right?”

“Dude, swap melons for curry and you’ve got my vote.”

“I want hamburgers instead.”

Ichika and Niku replied instantly. They were my unchanging rocks in these troubled times.

"I-In that case, I want to drink a whole bathtub of blood. The blood of the one I love...!"

*Rei, giving that much blood would kill them. Do you want your wedding to be a bloody tragedy?*

"...Would I like a clean room, or a filthy room... I suppose a filthy one, so that I could clean it."

"I want lots of magic boooks, and also scroooolls."

*Kinue and Neruneh aren't even talking about food anymore. I mean, not that blood is food.*

"If I may suggest..."

"No, Suilla! Please hold it in, I'm begging you."

"...The wooden dolls."

*Okay, that's safe! She had to cut out what she wants to do with the dolls, but we make them here so they're totally fine as gifts. But uh, looks like everyone's just talking about what they want as gifts. I dunno about this.*

"By the way, what do you want, Keima?" asked Rokuko.

"...Aren't I the one giving the stuff?"

"Then let's make it the couple giving each other gifts. Spit it out, bub."

*Well, I guess it was only a matter of time. Better think up something...*

"A futon, then. Something that'll help me sleep better."

"Okay. I'll let you use me as a dakimakura from now on, then."

"Uh, what? That sure is a giant leap of logic."

"Okaaay, let's iron out the rest of the details."

"Wait, we're just going to roll with the couple giving each other gifts?"

"...Why not?"

And so, we spent the rest of the night discussing the Beddhist wedding ceremony. I say 'we,' but I actually left and went to bed halfway through. 'Cause I mean, the girls (everyone but me) were getting so excited I didn't have the chance to say anything myself. And hey, far be it from me to miss an opportunity to sleep.

The thing is, though...

"You left midway through and said I could take care of the rest. Don't even think about complaining about what we decided on."

"Ah. Right."

...I kinda sacrificed my right to have any say on what the ceremony was.

"So, these are the different kinds of wedding ceremonies that Beddhism offers. Take a look and pick the one you like." After summoning Hubb and Waife, I showed them a pamphlet containing all the different options.

By the way, I had summoned them to the church. Suilla was with me to give them various bits of advice.

"There certainly are a lot of kinds. And they're customizable, too," observed Waife.

"Yes," replied Suilla. "Beddhism prides itself on being accommodating. By the way, I suggest the full nudity course."

Waife looked inside the pamphlet and her eyes widened in surprise. "W-Wait, are you sure about this? A night in the hotel's grand suite and an A-Rank dinner would cost thirty golds on their own. Is a single gold really enough for both of them...?" She looked at me with worry.

"...This time's special. Rokuko, the owner of the inn, is pretty excited about your wedding." On paper Rokuko was paying to cover the rest of the cost, but well, them staying in the grand suite didn't actually cost us anything. If it did cost anything, it wasn't much.

"By the way, if you have any requests, say so. We can add some options. We just want you to go big and have a good time."

"...Your wife kinda has you by the balls, huh?" Hubb looked at me with sympathy. *Hey, I told you, we're not married.*

"By the way, holy symbols and rings aren't included in

the one gold price. You'll have to prepare those on your own." That at least I made sure to stay firm on. There's no limit to how expensive they could get otherwise. I wouldn't want people asking me for orichalcum rings or holy symbols. It wouldn't be impossible to make them, but I would be losing money. A lot of it.

"I see... Oh, exchanging holy symbols is part of the base plan, but exchanging rings is optional."

"You don't have to do either if you don't want to."

"Oh, but I do! I would love a marriage as wonderful as your and Rokuko's!"

"...Again, I'm not married to Rokuko."

"What?" Both Hubb and Waife tilted their heads. *Nice teamwork there. You two should get married. Oh, you are. Congratu-fucking-lations.*

"Well, whatever. Have a look at the ring catalog. Suilla, show them."

"As you wish, your holiness. Hubb, here is the ring catalog."

"Oh! Th-Thank you." The catalog Suilla handed him had detailed drawings of the rings, each of which had very elaborate designs. Who had thought up those designs? Well, Rokuko and the others just drew whatever they thought looked cool. They'd made a lot of progress since they had bought a Japanese ring pamphlet from the DP catalog, apparently. Why did they go out of their way to make a different catalog just for rings, which were completely optional? I wanted to interrogate them, but well, I obviously wouldn't. It didn't matter that much.

"Wow, I've never seen any of these designs before!" exclaimed Waife. "These would all sell so well... but maybe we shouldn't wear something so expensive on us all the time. At the very least, a subtle iron ring that wouldn't stand out should be best."

"...Really? This is a once in a lifetime celebration, you know?"

“Someone might rip our fingers off if we carry around expensive rings on them. I don’t want thieves after us, so something cheap is ideal. A more subtle design would help with that.” Waife was just as practical as I would expect from an experienced traveling merchant. *But uh, that’s some real pessimism. I’d like to think my town isn’t that dangerous.*

“Goren is a safe place overall, but there’s also a lot of outside visitors. It’s far better to be safe than sorry when strangers are involved.”

“Well, I can’t argue with that...”

And so, they decided on some pretty plain rings. For the holy symbols they decided on silver ones with designs carved on the insides, with the special bonus that I, the pope, would carve it out myself. It seemed that silver holy symbols were pretty common and not too dangerous to carry around.

“To think that we’ll get our own holy symbols carved by the pope himself.”

“I know, right? It will be my pride and joy as a Beddhist.”

“Same. I honestly feel a little worried about wasting your time, town chief.”

*Heeey, don’t worry about it, I’m just losing a little sleeping time... or I would be if I didn’t use {Create Golem} to knock them out in less than a minute instead of spending hours carving them. It won’t take too long.*

*Anyway, let’s get this over with so I can get back to sleeping.*

“Let’s see, what’s left... The most time-consuming thing will probably be the wedding dress. It’ll take at least a week to finish it up, so yeah, come back in a week or so.”

“Wha?”

“U-Um, can you actually finish the dress in a week? You’re talking about... this one, with the frills and such? I think that would take much longer than a week to finish.” Now that she mentioned it, the design certainly was frilly and cloth heavy. Finishing it in a week after the initial measuring would be

too fast, I guess...? But, well...

"...Don't worry. Kinue said she could finish it."

"Kinue, as in the head chef at the cafeteria?"

Cleaning, laundry, cooking, sewing. Kinue was a master of all things housework. To be honest, it was hard not to think of her as a superhuman. Or rather, a supersilky. It would be fair to say that she was getting the most done out of all the monster girl administrators.

"So yeah, Waife, pick the two designs you like most out of these and bring them to Kinue."

"Two of them?"

"Well, it's actually customary to change dresses midway through the ceremony. You'll need a second one," explained Suilla, leading Waife to check the pamphlet again. It seemed she didn't know about how changing dresses was customary.

"By the way, I recommend this design. What do you think?"

"Fwaah?! Th-This is... Wow... Hubb, what do you think about this dress?"

"Woah! I mean, I think all of them would look good on you, but... this one's a tad too revealing. I'd like anything but that one. I don't... I don't want anyone else to see you in it."

"R-Really? That settles that, then."

They had been looking at a simple dress Suilla designed herself that left one's shoulders and belly button exposed.

*Can't really blame them for getting thrown off by it.*

Anyway, with all the customizable stuff settled, it was time to prepare. It would be mostly just townsfolk attending. Wouldn't be too hard to plan around that.

Kinue worked on the wedding dresses while we prepared the wedding. Things were going well, since the Silky trio and even Waife herself were helping. I myself was busy with carving the designs into the holy symbol. They were already done, but trust me. I was busy.

"By the way, why aren't you helping with the wedding

dress, Suilla? You must be pretty good at sewing if you can modify the nun outfits like that.” One day after mass that question struck, so I asked it. Really, she had modified the nun outfits so much they were pretty much unrecognizable from what I had originally given to her. Traces of the original design were still there, but seriously, she had changed them so slowly that I hadn’t even noticed.

“Oh, no, the clothes just changed on their own as our Succubus power soaked into them.”

“...Wait, that’s a thing?”

“Yes. All our clothes end up like this if we continue to wear them for a long time.” I thought she was joking, but Suilla looked dead serious.

“Uh. Like, seriously? No joke?”

“Yes, seriously. Do you think I would lie to you about this, your holiness?”

*I guess clothes get sexier when Succubus power seeps into them. Man, Succubi are scary.. I guess that’s why my clothes always become skimpier when I let Kosaki possess me.*

“It is for this reason that if we attempt to help, the dress will end up being revealing no matter what we do. We cannot help even though we would like to. A true shame.”

*I guess I’ll need to give them a regular supply of new nun outfits. I don’t want everyone visiting the church for the first time to mistake it for a themed brothel. Might be worth looking into that.*

“To think that Succubi had a curse that powerful...”

“A curse? I consider it a wonderful blessing, that turns all our clothes into their ideal form just by wearing them. I certainly love how stimulating this design is... By wearing these nun outfits, we express our Succubus nature, and... well. They feel extremely nice to wear, to say the least.” Suilla casually lifted the slip of her nun outfit covering her crotch, which had started to droop a bit while she talked.

“At least wear some underwear.”

"I am, you just can't see them. Please, take a closer look."

"The fact I can't see them even though you're basically shoving your exposed crotch in my face should say enough. Put on some underwear that I can actually tell exists."

"I will see what I can do."

*Did Leona teach you how to say no without actually saying no, Japanese-style? Come on. I'm begging you, put on underwear.* That said, I actually knew how to get Succubi to do what I wanted. Spending so much time with them over the past months had led to me understand how they think very well. First, give a cough. Then, say the magic words.

"Wearing underwear is sexier than no underwear, if you ask me."

"....." Her ears perked up a bit.

"Why are nun outfits sexy? Because they hide so much. It's safe to say that we humans are creatures that take pleasure in exposing hidden things."

"I see the logic. Please continue."

*Alright, I've got her attention.* "A person that's naked all the time might as well be an animal. They're not that sexy. Why? Because they're not hiding anything. We humans feel that something is erotic when the human logic and reason is used to hide our animal instincts. In short. The *peak* of eroticism is seeing a *peek* of sexuality."

"A peek...!"

"A panty shot is something usually hidden being briefly shown. And not intentionally shown off, either. The fact they want to hide it and keep it hidden is why a peek of the panties is so arousing. The important thing is spending each day hiding it to build up to the money shot. Which means..."

"Which means wearing underwear is more stimulating than not...!"

I grinned at Suilla's conclusion, and she replied with a smile of her own. In order to get Succubi to do what you wanted, you had to convince them that your way was sexier.

"Yep, that's how it is. I'll make sure you all get some

underwear to put on. I trust you'll know what to do."

"Yes. I understand everything, your holiness. I would expect nothing less from a scholar of your magnitude."

And so, in the midst of preparing for the wedding, I succeeded in getting the Succubi to actually wear underwear. I started seeing the strings from thongs dangling out from the side of their revealing nun outfits, but well, I did what I could.

## **# Beddhist Church's Perspective**

"I will now begin the ceremony." With Rei the High Priestess's declaration, the wedding ceremony began. Due in part to it being the town's first wedding ceremony, every citizen of Goren was present. The pews within the church were filled first with the friends Hubb and Waife invited, then with whoever could grab one in time. Everyone else was standing and watching from the outside.

A red carpet was spread from the entrance to the altar, with the seats positioned on either side of it. The carpet resembled the Ivory Church's Bloody Road, a symbol for how many monsters the husband had slain for the sake of she who would be his wife, but in Beddhism we called it the Culmination Road, to symbolize that it was the culmination of all their efforts up to this point. Each wedding was built on the back of blood, sweat, and tears.

The ceremony itself began with the groom walking up the Culmination Road to the altar. The bride would then follow after him and be welcomed there, where they would say their vows.

"Now then, the groom has arrived. Silence, please," declared Rei, the High Priestess of Beddhism, as she stood before the altar. A heavy silence immediately fell over the once chatter-filled church.

Rei lifted her hand high, and the Silkies by the door began playing their instruments. Two stringed instruments

of varying sizes accompanied a flute providing the melody. The song, one of many Beddhist hymns, was relaxed and repeated its melody several times.

Then, the doors to the church opened. There stood Hubb in brilliant white clothing, his face taut with anxiety. With its decorative strings and gold buttons his outfit looked fit for a noble. Normally Hubb would say the clothes were wearing him more than he was wearing them, but today of all days he seemed a perfect match for them. Perhaps that was thanks to his pride as a groom.

Hubb walked slowly but firmly to the altar while those on either side of the carpet watched. He was looking forward, where vividly colored light was streaming through stained glass windows. Beddhism had no gods, but there was something about the light that made it seem divine.

He heard voices behind the shut doors as he walked, which then faded. For a moment he questioned who had been speaking, but he soon had his answer.

“Now entering the bride. Please welcome her quietly.”

The doors to the church opened again, and there stood a woman resembling a fairy princess with her face hidden behind a thin veil — it was his bride, Waife, wrapped in a light green dress.

“...Ah!” Hubb reflexively swallowed hard. Waife’s beauty was so much that even some onlookers gasped. For a second nobody could believe this was the same Waife who traveled the world doing trade. Her light green dress had tiny, shining gemstones sewn into it, looking so expensive that it alone could be worth a fortune. Behind the veil, her calm expression was visible.

“Yeah... She’s gonna have him by the balls.”

“Yup...”

The crowd couldn’t help but predict what kind of future awaited the two of them. Hubb was frozen in fear, whereas Waife was completely relaxed. Everyone could tell that Hubb’s strength of will wouldn’t be able to beat out Waife’s

in the coming years. Though in reality she was deathly nervous about wearing a dress that seemed more expensive than her life savings, and the veil was just hiding how anxious she was.

By the way, normally the bride's father would escort her to the altar, but Waife had no way of contacting her father since their original home village had been lost. As a result, she was being escorted by a particularly well-dressed Dyne, her current employer.

Waife advanced to the altar, with a child nun holding up her skirt from behind so it didn't drag. She was beautiful enough to be considered a quintessential bride. Once she reached where Hubb was, Dyne's job was done. He left the rest of the escorting to Hubb and sat in the front row, where he would watch over the rest of the proceedings.

"J-Just follow me."

"R-Right, okay."

They conversed in quiet tones, with Waife wrapping an arm around Hubb's elbow. They both had an air of awkward innocence that made it seem like this was their first date, and those watching in the crowd knew they were made for each other.

"Y-You look great, Waife."

"...And you look so manly, Hubb. It's like I'm getting to see the real you for the first time."

"Ahem," coughed Rei, interrupting their flirting. "May I begin?" The two of them nodded, cheeks red with embarrassment, and Rei nodded herself with a gentle smile. The music stopped.

In most other religions, a pastor or priest would do the honors, but Beddhism had no gods. It was thus decided that it would be best for the High Priestess to carry out the wedding. As a note, the pope elected to have no involvement with the proceedings whatsoever.

"Let us all offer up a song in prayer." Next came chanting a hymn. It was the same song that the Silkies had been

playing before, and now everyone present added to the melody. The hymn was titled *Sleep Peacefully*, and it resembled a lullaby... or rather, it was an actual lullaby that Beddhism was in the process of spreading throughout the world.

Each seat had a card with the lyrics written on it, so nobody had to panic. Everyone participated in the chanting with calm and peaceful voices. A few present had, uh, less than stellar pitch, but nothing that one couldn't overlook.

Once the hymn was safely finished, Rei the High Priestess opened up the Beddhist bible that was placed upon the altar. "Let us discuss the meaning of love." As was fit for a wedding, Rei discussed how love was portrayed in the bible. "Love is, ultimately, compassion for your partner. It is a splendid emotion. However, not all forms of love are ideal. Sometimes love can take ill forms. There are the Yan-Deres, and perhaps the Stal-Kers, who have no compassion in their so-called love, and thus only hurt others in the end." The sad tales of love that Yan-Deres and Stal-Kers brought about had been discussed in prior masses, so the couple as devout followers of Beddhism were very familiar with them.

"Love is splendid. And due to how splendid it is, there are many cases of lovers being so blinded by it they lose sight of their surroundings. Love-Triangle, Casas, Konya, Kuhaki..." These names were listed in Beddhism as those who had destroyed themselves after drowning in love. Love-Triangle and Casas in particular had even brought down all those around them as well.

"We must be thankful for the failures of our forebears, and we must not repeat their mistakes. Always be compassionate for the one you love, do not lose sight of your surroundings, and if you find yourself being consumed, find the opportunity to take a break. If you hold these lessons true, you shall find love to be a splendid thing without any fault." There, Rei smiled a bright smile full of compassion. "In Beddhism, we call compassionate love that embraces one as

a futon might by the name Comfylove.” Comfylove. What a splendid and beautiful word. It was such a powerful word that the pope, sitting in the first row, had to hide his face for all the emotion he was showing.

“Compassion with a warm, enveloping embrace. Love brings about peace. Love is the source of power. The love of a parent protecting their children. The love of a guardian protecting the peace. The love of friends sharing their joy and laughing together. The love of a couple seeking each other. And finally, the love of two who have been married, who spend their lives together through the highs and lows in life. It allows for peaceful sleep where both are compassionate for each other. Heartwarming love is thus called Comfylove. And thus is how love should be. Hubb, Waife. Please hold firm the idea of Comfylove within your hearts. As long as you have Comfylove, the Beddhist church will always be there for you. May your love be blessed. Oyasuminasai.”

“...Oyasuminasai,” repeated the crowd. It was the holy word of Beddhist prayer. Rei the High Priestess chanted it, and so too did those watching in prayer.

“Now, if the bride and groom would say their vows.”

Rei shifted to the side behind the altar, such that she was standing directly in front of Hubb. “Do you, Hubb, take Waife as your legally wedded wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, in sleep and in waking, until death do you part? Do you swear to strive to have pleasant sleep with her, spending your life with her, to speak honestly when things become too much and to fight for her sake when necessary?”

“I-I swear it,” answered Hubb despite his anxiety, and with a nod Rei moved to stand in front of Waife.

“Do you, Waife, take Hubb as your legally wedded husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in

health, in sleep and in waking, until death do you part? Do you swear to strive to have pleasant sleep with him, spending your life with him, to speak honestly when things become too much and to fight for his sake when necessary?"

"...Yes, I swear it." Waife also made the vow. Rei the High Priestess nodded and returned to the center of the altar.

The vow was an oath that they would both be compassionate to one another. As was normal for the hands-free Beddhist Church, it focused more on a state of mind than any physical practices to uphold. The Ivory Church and the Church of Lux demanded that the couple vow to work hard together. But the Beddhist Church knew that human hearts tended to wander. The secret to long-lasting marriages was not to push oneself, but to relax and keep things reasonable. Thus, the focus on compassion.

"Now then, please exchange your rings and holy symbols." A nun appeared from the side, holding a small box. Inside were rings and holy symbols for Hubb and Waife.

They put the rings on each other's left hands, the finger next to the pinky. That had become tradition after a Hero introduced the concept of a ring finger, but for Beddhism it was also honoring where the pope and his partner wore their rings. They mimicked their traditions so that they too could become a wonderful couple. The exchange of engraved holy symbols was to symbolize their partnership as two with the same hopes and dreams.

"...Now, the kiss."

There, Hubb and Waife faced each other once again. Hubb lifted the veil covering Waife's face. That apparently symbolized that there were no longer any walls separating them.

"Waife..."

"Hubb..."

They looked into each other's eyes. And then, they kissed.

"I hereby declare that these two are married.

Oyasuminasai! Everyone, celebrate!"

“Congrats! Congrats, Hubb!”

“I’d kill for a wife like yours, man!”

“Waife! You’re so pretty! Congratulations!”

“Have a happy life! Oyasuminasai!”

“Yup yup,” yelled Ichika, “Going this far for a kiss like that was totally worth it! Graaats!”

“Heheh, that will be me soon...!” murmured Rokuko as Niku quietly clapped beside her.

All those gathered, in fact, clapped and tossed out words of celebration at the High Priestess’s behest.

“Oh, you can stop kissing now.”

“R-Right.”

“N-Nnn, I knew kissing in front of people would be embarrassing...” muttered Waife quietly. Her blushing was cute and Hubb wanted to keep it all for himself, so he put the veil back on her.

...Such was the right of a husband legally recognized by the Beddhist Church, and it most certainly did not represent walls forming between them again. It certainly symbolized that the husband was protecting his wife with his own two hands.

“May this couple be forever happy! Now, everyone, it is time for them to leave. Applause, please!”

Hubb locked arms with Waife and guided her out of the church.

“Let’s go, Waife.”

“Yes, my love.”

And so the two of them walked down the Culmination Road with cheers and applause surrounding them on both sides.

“Aaand, thus concludes the ceremony. We’ll be holding an open feast in just a moment, so I request that everyone here moves outside of the church. Hey, no pushing. Take your time, there’s enough for everyone.” And so the wedding part of the ceremony concluded.

The wedding itself was the main event for the Beddhist

Church, but for those participating it would be fair to say that things were just getting started. After all, in this world weddings were just excuses for an entire town to get together and feast like crazy.

...There was still the bouquet and the feast left. It would be an all-you-can-eat buffet with Rokuko footing the bill, as the pamphlet described.

## **# Maiodore's Perspective**

"My, that was just wonderful..." Maiodore had participated in the Beddhist wedding with her father, Bonodore the archduke. He was an invited guest. Hubb and Waife had cautiously sent him an invitation given his relationship with the town, and apparently him accepting had shocked them so much they nearly fell over.

The archduke himself, participating in the wedding of some random villagers? They had probably never expected it. He had indeed worn normal commoner clothes to blend in, but they hardly made a difference. In the end he was still wearing clothes on par with the married couple and those in the front row.

"This ceremony certainly resembled an Ivory Church marriage," Bonodore noted. "Though there were some points adjusted to suit the Beddhist Church's philosophy."

"Geez, father. Analyzing customs during ceremonies is uncouth. Haaah, now I truly want to have a wonderful wedding of my own with Kuro. That was such a splendid dress."

"I hear they finished that dress in a single week."

"Although true, the dress itself was found within the dungeon by Keima. It seems all they had to do was decorate it and make some minor size adjustments. I helped with that a tad."

"I see, that is significantly more reasonable." Bonodore nodded, one mystery having been solved.

"Incidentally, there's another dress just like it, for the color change."

"...C-Come again...? There's another dress, just like that one?"

"Yes. I helped embroider it! Just a little, though. It was a red adult dress with black gemstones embedded in it."

"...I suppose I should suspect nothing less when Keima is involved."

There were two dresses embroidered with enough gemstones that could buy an entire mansion just by selling either of them. Bonodore decided not to think too hard about that.

"Speaking of which, father, have you ever heard the word Comfylove before?"

"Comfylove... I've heard the two halves of independently, but never together. It's a splendid word, I'd say. What could be better than love that's as comfy and heartwarming as a bed...?" Bonodore thought about his own wife, Waltz. He was a high ranking noble, but he had married Waltz out of love. "I've never heard the word before, but it rings deeply in my heart... Thinking back, there has always been a comfy warmth I've felt with Waltz. That is surely the Comfylove of which he speaks."

"I too feel warm and happy when I'm with Kuro. That must mean I am enveloped with Comfylove for her," said Maiodore with her cheeks blushing.

"Not to mention, I quite liked the vows the couple swore."

"They were kind vows filled with compassion for one another... Aahaaah."

"I especially liked the part about being honest when things became too much. If one knows the struggles the other is going through, it becomes easier to accept that you aren't the only one suffering, which will breed compassion."

"I see... I should tell Kuro the things I want to say too!" Maiodore lifted her head proudly, which made Bonodore raise an eyebrow.

“...I’ve been meaning to mention this, but you do know your engagement with her was made on the assumption it would be canceled, yes?”

“I will ensure it happens, no matter what!”

“Kuroinu is a skilled enough warrior that I would gladly accept her into my family, but... Well, regardless. Rondo will inherit the duchy. You may do as you like.”

“I will! Ensure! It happens! No matter what...! I think I will ask Michiru to perform the service, actually.”

Bonodore, pleased by her enthusiasm, patted his daughter’s head, slightly mussing it in the process. “In any case, it seems as if there is something happening before the feast? What was all that about?”

“Oh, the bouquet toss! It’s the bouquet toss, father! I can’t be here; I need to give it everything I have!” The bouquet toss. An infamous event present in Ivory Church weddings as well, having been introduced by a Hero. The bride would throw a bouquet high into the air, and whichever woman caught the bouquet would be fated to become the next bride.

It was perhaps due to this event that every unmarried woman in the city, excluding the nuns, were present for the wedding. There were a surprising number of them... Part of that was due to Waife inviting mostly women, but it seemed that female adventurers making a living in Tsia and Pavella had heard rumors of the wedding and rushed over.

Though to be clear, there weren’t many kids like Maiodore participating. Or to be more precise, since Michiru was part of the nun squad, there was only one other kid participating.

“Kuro! Are you participating too?”

“Oh, Mai. Are you going for the bouquet toss?”

“Yes. I’ll grab it out of the air and become the next bride!”

“Master told me to participate, so I am... I won’t lose.” It was likely that he had only said that casually in hopes of her having fun, but suddenly the thought struck Maiodore. If Kuro caught the bouquet, that would make Maiodore the

husband. In other words, they were competing to see who would be wearing the wedding dress. *I won't lose*, thought Maiodore, before correcting herself. *Rather, I won't let Kuro get the bouquet! Anyone but her!*

"I will not lose either! I want to wear a splendid dress like that as well! I will get the bouquet myself no matter the cost!"

"Hm? You're cute, Mai, so a dress like that would look good on you."

"...Hyah?! Ah, aaah, thank you very much!" *But I won't hold back just because you complimented me!* added Maiodore on the inside.

And it was then that the toss began. Waife yelled "Here I gooo!", then tossed the bouquet as high as she could behind her.

*So high!* thought Maiodore. Perhaps it would be best for her to fly. But on second thought, she couldn't fly very well yet.

The bouquet fluttered down, carried by the wind. She predicted where it would land and headed that way, only to find other participants standing there already. That said, Maiodore's victory condition was actually just preventing a certain person from getting the bouquet. She searched for that person — Kuro — and found her a short distance away from the crowd.

*From that distance, she won't be able to catch it...* It happened the second after Maiodore thought that.

"Ichika, I'm borrowing your head."

"Wha, c'mon, bguwwuh?!" Kuro leapt into the air, using Ichika's head as a springboard. She leapt... straight toward the bouquet. That acrobatic feat was the mark of she who was known as the strongest fighter in Goren. After catching the bouquet, she rolled in the air and landed gracefully on her feet.

"Woah! Did she just fly through the air?!"

"Who is that kid?!"

"It's Kuroinu, the strongest adventurer in Goren!"

"The ambush nobody expected...!"

"C'mon, Kuro, don't be immatu-... Wait, you're a kid! Nooo!"

"Does this mean none of us are getting married until Kuro does...?! This can't be happening!"

The other participants were surprisingly devastated. Maiodore included, of course.

"Ngh...! I can't believe Kuro wanted to wear the wedding dress that much...! Ah, but well, of course she would want to wear a splendid dress like the one we saw. Even I had my heart stolen by it!" Maiodore sadly plopped down onto the ground without a care for how that would dirty her dress. Kuro walked over with the bouquet in hand.

"Hm? What's wrong, Mai?"

"Oh, it's nothing. Congratulations, Kuro. I am sure that wedding dress will look perfect on you." So she said, but Kuro just tilted her head in confusion.

"I'm not sure what you mean, but here. You can have it, Mai."

"Wha?" Maiodore looked at the bouquet held out to her in disbelief.

"Well? Didn't you want it?"

"Oh, yes... Yes!" Maiodore took the bouquet. She had briefly considered that crossdressing as Kuro sometimes did would be fine, but at heart as a girl she still found herself enraptured by the idea of wearing a wedding dress.

Kuro handed over the bouquet she had gone out of her way to get without any hesitation. Her expression was as blank as ever, but Maiodore was envisioning the gallant smile of a prince on her face.

"...I am so grateful to be engaged to you, Kuro."

"That's good. I'm glad." Incidentally, Kuro had been raised in an environment where flowery things like weddings weren't even a consideration, and thus naturally had no idea that catching the bouquet signified becoming a bride. Not

that she would have cared, anyway. Her focus was entirely on the upcoming feast. Food was more important than romance. Such was the nature of children her age.

“Ngh... So this is Comfylove...!”

“This is the love of the Beddhist Church!”

“I can feel it. I can feel... the love.”

“The Comfylove is overflowing...!”

The bouquet toss participants who had been watching them from start to finish began writhing in discomfort, but neither Kuro or Maiodore really paid them any heed.

## **# Keima’s Perspective**

I let out a sigh of relief once the bouquet toss was over.

“...That ends the ceremony. All that’s left is basically the party.” That might have been my first time attending an actual wedding. Well, I might’ve gone to some family member’s wedding when I was a kid, but if I did, I was so young I didn’t remember anything about it.

“Mmm,” murmured Rokuko, “Maybe that wasn’t the best way to do the bouquet toss. Timing and placement-wise this was the only time to do it, but it feels kinda weird to have the newlywed couple leave the church and then just wait around. We should at least have them waiting in a room nearby.”

“Huh? What’re you writing down, Rokuko?”

“I mean, obviously things to improve for next time. Trial runs are always going to have all sorts of problems.”

*Makes sense. Guess she’s trying to work out better plans for the next wedding to squeeze out more money. When did Rokuko get so hardcore about things?*

“Actually, Rokuko, you don’t mind that you missed the bouquet toss?”

“It’s fine. I’ll want two or three more samples to iron out the kinks, I think, so there will be plenty more opportunities for me. Though I won’t be paying for those.”

*Hmm, using acute observation to build up experience through constructive trial and error... Rokuko's the very model of a business owner now. Seems like she's intent on making this bridal project succeed.*

Rokuko shut her notepad, having finished writing down whatever had been bothering her. "Okay, next up is the feast — the wedding reception. There's no work for us to do here, so let's just enjoy ourselves, Keima. Sound good?"

"Yeah." Rokuko and I were casually sitting in some of the visitor seats, watching the Silkies hurry about distributing the food. Incidentally, the plan for the reception was for Hubb and Waife to cut their wedding cake, give a speech, and then lead the crowd into the party. But Rokuko and I had absolutely nothing to do. That was all according to Rokuko's plan, of course.

"Hey, Rokuko. Why aren't we doing any work here, again?" We had helped to some degree with the setup, but she had been strict about neither of us doing any work the day-of. I had thought that was because I would have some religious duties as pope, but no, I had nothing at all to do. So much so that they had adopted some nonsense about Comfylove I had written as a joke into the ceremony. *Man, it sure was hard not to bust out laughing at that.*

Rokuko answered my question with a tone that made it clear she had no idea why I had needed to ask that. "I mean, because when we do our wedding, we'll be the couple. The couple can't do any work at their own wedding."

*...I see. This really was just a trial run for your own dream wedding, huh?*

"Don't worry, Keima. I'll use the experience I've gained here to make our wedding perfect!"

"R-Right." I appreciated Rokuko's enthusiasm, but, uh... I wasn't saying yes or no to the wedding, I was just nodding along as she went. *Y'know, it might just be time for me to start preparing to fight Haku.*



Thoughts of my impending death flashed through my mind as the party began. The crowd had stirred at Waife's second dress, Hubb had cut the cake and they ate the first bite, and their friends had finished their speeches.

The food up until now had been fancy high-class food, but what awaited was a wild feast where everyone in town regardless of religious affiliation could eat all they wanted. It was basically a gigantic frat party, one that both invited guests and random passersby got pulled into. In Japanese terms it might be called something similar to the after-party of an after-party where only the closest friends stuck around. Except it was the whole town instead.

So yeah, there were mountains of beer and food for everyone to eat. Apparently, it was supposed to represent the couple giving everyone a ton of food to get them off their backs. Incidentally, once the main events were over, the couple headed to their grand suite at the inn. They would spend the rest of their time alone, taking their time with whatever needed to be done without anyone bothering them outside of extreme circumstances. *Yeaaah, feel free to return the dresses the morning-after.*

"Heyooo, town chief, ya drinkin' anyyy?!" yelled an unsurprisingly drunken Gozou, his face bright red.

"Hey, Gozou. That's gonna be a no from me."

"C'moon! This is Hubb's wedding, y'know?! How's everyone supposed to let loose if the town chief's not letting loose!" *My man, everyone is already letting loose.*

"He's riiight, Keima. Drink a littleeee, burp!" said a lurid, familiar voice. I turned around to see Rokuko eyeing me up with an empty beer mug in her hand. Her face was bright red.

"Hey! Who gave Rokuko beer?!"

"It was him." "Nah, it was him." "Him." "I gave her some too, but it was him." "Oh, should I not have?"

"Of course you shouldn't have!"

"What're you talking about? She's an adult, ain't she?"

*Ngh! Now that he mentions it, Rokuko does look just barely like an adult in this world when she's not in her DP-saving form. Anyone who's known Rokuko for a while here will think she's of age, obviously.*

"No backtalk! I say she can't drink and that means she can't! And come on, she's obviously had way too much!"

"My bad. It was just so fun seeing her gulp it all down I couldn't help myself." *What'll you do if she gets acute alcohol poisoning?!*

"Don't sweaaaaat it, Keimaaaaa. Wait, when'd you learn a duplication skill, Keimaaa? Whaaa, waiiit, everyone's duplicateed! But I can't touch the cloones?" Rokuko smacked the empty air beside me (where presumably she was seeing double). She had gotten completely drunk. *Talk about being hammered... Man. Now I'm scared she's gonna leak our deadly secrets to someone.*

"Oh, I can touch this Keima! Eheheheheeeheh."

"Uh, Rokuko?"

"Alriiiight! Let's get to drinking, Keimaaa!"

"Stop! Drinking! You're coming with me, bucko."

"Awww, but whyyyy? Do you have something fun for meee? Lemme tell you now, I don't want any friggin' gobliiins. Melon rolls? Gimme some melon rolls, Keimaaaaa!" I used my golem assistance to pick up Rokuko and evacuate to the chief's residence as she kicked her legs.

"Hey, look everyone! We've got some more newlyweds over here!"

"Really?! Congraaats!"

"COMFYLOOOOOOVE!"

"Oyasuminasai!"

Cheers of celebration rang out as I escaped with Rokuko in my arms. "What will make them understand that Rokuko and I aren't married...?"

"Awww, Keima, do you... not wanna marry me?" asked

Rokuko, looking at me with sultry, wet eyes.

“...The problem is that I kinda would!” *And marrying you means getting killed by Haku!*

“Then what’s the probleeem? Keimaaa, kiss meeee!”

“No! There’s big problems!” Rokuko pursed her lips in my arms and started leaning forward to kiss me, but suddenly stopped midway through.

“Oh, right. I got the order wrong. Rei! REEEEE! Say the vows agaaain! This is an order, get to it!”

“Bwuhuh?! U-Understood, right away!” Rei, who had been doing her job as High Priestess, dropped everything to rush over to us.

“Ummm, Keima, do you take Rokuko as your lawfully wedde—”

“Good enough! I sweaaaaar!”

“Bwuuhuh?! ”

“Hey! Don’t shorten the vows!” *And you skipped the whole groom part! You’re gonna cut my part out of the vows?!*

“E-Erm, in that case, you may now kiss the bride.”

“Rei, you don’t have to do this. I’ll get Rokuko in bed, you do whatever it is you need to do!” I ran off. If not for the golem assistance I probably wouldn’t have been able to run while princess-carrying Rokuko. *Thank you, golem assistance, thank you {Create Golem}. A-Anyway, I need to distract myself with pointless nonsense. If I don’t—*

“What’s the problem, Keimaaa? I’m yours, sooo... kiss me?”

*—I won’t be able to resist Rokuko while she’s drunk. She’s just that overwhelming.*

“Alright, alright. Just settle down.”

“Eheheheh. You said alright. That means we’re married! Noooo takebaaacks! Ahahaha, yaaaay!” Rokuko giggled with glee, but the happier she got the more physically and mentally exhausted I became.

*...I can’t let Rokuko get drunk. And I can’t let her be like*

*this in public, either. No doubt about that now.*

I finally reached Rokuko's room and went inside after somehow managing to open her door while carrying her. The air was adrift with her familiar smell, though it was a little more natural-smelling here than in my arms. The room itself was neatly organized without much stuff in general. Even the comics she had taken from my room were neatly organized on shelves.

"Here, we made it to your room. Get off me."

"Nuh-uh."

"Don't nuh-uh me." I put Rokuko down onto the bed. But she wouldn't let go of me.

"...I'll let go if you kiss me. If you give me the wedding kiss."

"I'm telling you, I can't do that yet." So I said, but Rokuko pulled me towards her. I lost my balance and was forced to lie next to her. *Why is she so crazy stro— Oh right, she has golem assistance too.*

"When will you be ready? I'm already all yours, why won't you be mine...?"

"...When? I mean, I guess when Haku gives her permission." Rokuko's face was right in front of my eyes. Her cheeks were red, showing that she was still a little drunk. I could hear a thumping heartbeat. Was it mine or Rokuko's? No idea.

"She'll obviously say yes. So go ahead, kiss me."

"Face the facts, she's not gonna say yes. Which means no kiss."

"Grr. You big bully. You big coward."

"..." I didn't argue with Rokuko's pouting insults. I certainly was being cowardly here, after all.

"...Well, Keima... If you won't kiss me, will you at least spend the night with me?"

"Fine, fine. Better than you going back into that mess."

"Mmm. I'll keep this a secret from Haku for you..." said Rokuko with a smile as she wrapped her arms around me,

falling asleep with me as her dakimakura.

*...Did I manage to go the whole night without losing my self-control? Yes, yes I did. 'Cause I'm a coward!*

"Thank you very much, town chief. I'll never forget how perfect our wedding was."

"It's thanks to you that we had such an amazing wedding, Rokuko. Thank you! Here are the dresses you lent me. Oh, and of course I didn't take a single gemstone off them! All one hundred and twenty-eight of them are still there!"

"Sweet. You, uh, counted them, huh?"

The fact that Rokuko was blushing harder than Hubb and Waife when they came to return their {Purified} clothes was a fact I'll keep between you and me. *I'm just gonna have to hope that none of this leaks to Haku. Hope and pray...*

## Chapter 2

And so began another peaceful day in Goren. Adventurers-turned-farmers, the bulk of the populace, were putting their all into tending their fields.

“Man, my field is super great. Grow well, my beloved cucumbers.”

“Yeah, the crops are all sparkling with dew! Your flashes of skin really get me going, you cutie radishes!”

“I’m not surprised you’re drooling over some slutty skin showing. You could learn a lot from how modest my potatoes are.”

The farmers, having learned from one of the books in the Beddhist church that plants grew better if you talked to them, had grown accustomed to talking to their crops while farming. They all doubted that at first, but the plants were alive after all. If you considered how some monsters were walking, man-eating plants, it just made sense that pouring love into crops would make them grow better. That line of logic was all it took to convince them.

And indeed, the crops did start to taste better. They really had no option but to talk to their crops anymore.

As an aside, despite the fact that it was well into winter, the fields were nice and warm thanks to the effects of farming magic tools. A noble who had begun practicing Beddhism casually lent them at Goren’s request. He had been using similar ones in his garden. They were probably outrageously expensive, but due to agreeing with the pope’s position he lent them for cheap.

To give more details on them, a single one of the tools could keep three small fields warm for half a day using just a single goblin’s garbage-quality magic stone. They could

keep their fields warm just by working together to kill two goblins a day... which killed two birds with one stone, since goblin corpses were good fertilizer too.

“Bout time for the harvest, huh?”

“Heheh, hear that, my little sweets? Kinue’s gonna make you into good food and the nuns are gonna eat you up. Man, I’m jeal—I mean, man, I’m happy for you all.”

“Hm? Hey, what’s that?” One of the farmers noticed something in the sky. At first it looked like a tiny dot, but it was growing steadily, as if it was heading straight for them.

Soon, the red scales covering its large body became visible. It had two featherless wings that looked like they belonged to a bat, yet its head was that of a reptile. The horn removed all doubt, however. It was a red dragon.

“Ngh! A dragon?! We gotta evacuate!”

“What?! Is it after my field?! Bastard, I’ll fight you off with the Holy Radish Blade I grew myself! One sec, just lemme pull it out!”

“You want cucumbers?! Three of them?! That’s too many!”

“Come on, am I the only sane one here?! This isn’t the time for games! We gotta run away!”

It was a red dragon of the fire element, and it was no normal dragon. The rampaging flames wrapped around its body showed that it was a Flame Dragon, which was a Red Dragon even more in tune with the fire element.

Once the dragon was close enough to be fully visible, it flapped its wings in the air. It then opened its mouth wide... and sucked in air.

“Oh shit! This is the first time I’m seeing a dragon but it’s definitely about to breathe some fire! Watch out!”

“H-Hey, are you telling me to leave my radishes behind?! No way! I’m about to get them on, just hold it!”

“This isn’t a joke, it’s gonna kill us! You can just farm more radishes later! We gotta at least get the magic tool and... Oh, oh no! GAAAAAH!”

And so. Fire breath licked across the ground, destroying

everything.

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“...And that summarizes the dragon attack that left part of the town on fire.”

“How many dead?”

“Thankfully none. The silver lining of all this, I suppose...” said Wozma, concluding his report. I responded with a nod. *Though honestly, I knew all of this from watching it happen on the map. I sure flipped the heck out when I saw it happening in real time. For a second I'd thought another insanely overpowered monster like Rin was here to cause chaos.*

Luckily for me, the dragon had continued on to the peak of Tsia Mountain without paying our dungeon any mind. *Yep, just a casual dragon fly-by. Totally normal in this fantasy hellscape. Hope Ittetsu can handle that dragon... But wait, according to Rokuko, a Flame Dragon is pretty deep in the fire element. Ittetsu's fire element too, so won't it end up kinda like both of them playing “rock” in rock-paper-scissors over and over? I'll ask about that later.*

“Anyway. Farming in winter, huh? Do crops grow well like that? Or are there just some special crops that grow in winter?”

“It seems that the farmers were using a greenhouse magic tool lent to them by Archduke Bonodore. It luckily survived the fire.”

“A greenhouse magic tool? Those exist? And they were borrowing one?”

“It seems he was using it for a garden he had in the past that no longer exists.”

“Sounds convenient. Can we mass produce them?”

“It was found in a dungeon. And it does not affect a particularly wide area, so it wouldn't be usable on the large-scale farms run by the Tsia family.”

"Makes sense."

"So, what shall we do about the dragon? It is believed to still be located around Tsia Mountain."

"Huh? Uhhh, I'll go check out the fields and look around. See if anyone knows something about the dragon." *Oh, and it might be Redra's family or some member of the Dragon King faction. I'll ask about that later, too.*

So yeah, I went to look at the burned field. Rokuko tagged along since she wanted to see the scorched ground. Along the way we discovered that there was a food stand for some reason, where the Silkies were selling buttered potatoes to people passing on the road. I bought one since Rokuko looked like she wanted one, and it was actually pretty good.

Anyway, Rokuko nodded after looking over the fields. "Hm. Seems like it wasn't going all out."

"Is that so, Rokuko?" asked Wozma. She gave a confident grin and puffed out her chest with pride before answering.

"Uh-huh. I can tell since I'm an expert on dragons. It had red scales, which means it was a fire dragon. If it had been serious the ground itself would have melted. By now it would have cooled and been smooth like glass. The fact that the ground's still fine means it was just messing around." Thinking back, when Redra used her full-power breath to hatch the Phoenix egg, the rock floor of the dungeon certainly had ended up looking like glass.

"I see. You truly are a scholar, Rokuko."

"Yup! Aren't you impressed, Keima?!" Rokuko looked at me with a smug expression, fishing for compliments. *Why is it that I want to give her a nice chop? There's just something punchable about her smug grin.*

"Well, you're probably not wrong. Looks like it just burned the top of the ground, and if we send some golems over to plow it again the farmers can be back at work sowing seeds by the evening."

"Oh? You seem well-informed on dragons as well, Keima. Entirely as if you are a first-class adventurer."

“...I memorized this stuff while listening to Rokuko prattle. That’s it.”

“Haha, forgive my rudeness.”

*Would probably be better to keep quiet about the fact that I’m friends with a Red Dragon. Just add it to the list of dungeon secrets I can never tell anyone.*

“By the way, why’s that guy crying like his whole family was killed?”

“One of these fields belongs to him. The radishes he poured his heart and soul into were all destroyed.”

“Cucumbers sure are nice, you managed to save a couple of them! And potatoes? Hey, they’re underground, the fire just cooked them to a tasty crisp! You got to dig them out and have a good meal! But me? I’ve got nothing anymore! I’ve lost it all!” *Oh, that explains the buttered potato stands.* Two farmers, the owners of the other damaged fields, were patting the shoulders of their weeping radish farmer friend.

“Hahaha, that’s why modest potatoes are so great. Long live potatoes!”

“By the way, I mixed my cucumbers into potato salad and made a killing off them. I’m already sold out!”

“Are you two demons?!”

*Glad to see them doing so well.*

“Besides, aren’t your radishes still edible? They’re underground vegetables just like my potatoes.”

“Yeah, but my plan to make the smooth white radishes wear kneesocks is completely ruiined!”

“You, uh... wow. You really went in that deep, huh? I heard that all the radishes you had stored inside were burned too. That’s rough, buddy. Just cry it all out.”

*...Glad to see them doing so well. These three are all former adventurers, so they don’t need to worry about going broke just because their farms were destroyed. Wozma asked the Guild to lend them some weapons and equipment, so yeah, it should be fine.*

“Uhhh, well, I’m just glad nobody died.” *And y’know, I*

*remember these guys joking around like this even when the dragon was coming right for them. The question is whether they're idiots, brave, idiots, smart enough to have backup plans to survive dragon fire, or idiots.*

"Indeed. By the way, town chief, they are just idiots. A normal adventurer would either freeze in fear or flee immediately. They were saved only by the whim of the dragon." Wozma, reading my thoughts through my expression, confirmed my suspicions. *Occam's razor wins again.*

"...Alright then. Oh, right, their homes got burned up too. Guess I'll give them a discount on inn rooms while they're being rebuilt."

"Just a discount? Not free?"

"If I make it free, they won't do any work," I said, earning a hard look and a sigh from Wozma. *Yeah, that's right. I'm a hypocrite. What about it?*

"I'm town chief, I don't have to work. 'Cause I'm just a figurehead." Anyway, I told the Silkies running the stand to call the buttered potatoes Dragon Potatoes to boost the price a bit. Might as well wring money out of people where we can.

"...Though in truth, you certainly do work a lot, town chief."

"Hahaha. Irony, isn't it?" He was just joking around. At most I signed a few pieces of paperwork a day. The town administrators were keeping everything else going. Even in extraordinary circumstances like this I usually just showed up and looked things over for show. *Yup, being a figurehead leader sure is great! Anyway, time to talk to the victims. Yet another important job for a politician.*

"Cheer up, fellas. With the golems helping out you'll be back to farming in no time."

"Town chief! I'll... I'll work hard and grow more radishes! This time for sure, I'll get some kneesocks on them...!"

"R-Right on. That's the spirit." Somehow, they were

already back on their feet. Then again, crops grew pretty fast here due to the dungeon's overflowing mana.

"Do you have the seeds for that, though?"

"Oh, right, they were burned with my house... Guess the field will be empty for a bit..."

"Huh? That'd be a waste. Why don't you try growing these?" I stuck my hand into the bag on my hip as a cover while stealthily pulling sugar beet seeds from {Storage}. They were the ones that I had previously tried to use to make a killing off sugar.

"Oooh! Thank you, town chief! What kind of seeds are these?"

"Sugar beets, a plant that can be turned into sugar. Pretty sure one of the books in the church explains how to make sugar, so have at it." *Yeah, Ichika made me translate some recipe books, and I think I put them on the bookshelves to pad them out.*

"...Town chief, where'd you get those seeds? Plants turning into sugar sounds pretty crazy."

"Consider that a Beddhist secret."

"Seriously? Beddhism is incredible! Thank you! Oyasuminasai!"

"Whoa, those seem great! Can I have some too, town chief?"

"Me too, me too!"

"Sure, but you're gonna have to give me some back later once they're grown." The cucumber and potato guys wanted the sugar beets too, so I gave them some extra seeds. I wasn't going to do anything else with them, after all. *Oh, but if they all turn into sugar beet farmers, I won't know what to call them... Meh. Who cares.*

"Impressive as always, town chief. When did you acquire those seeds?"

"Who knows, it's been so long I can't even remember."

Wozma shook his head with an exasperated sigh. *Uhhh... Is making sugar out of plants that crazy?*

“Hey, Keima,” chimed in Rokuko. “Won’t it be a waste to rebuild the farms if the dragon just comes to ruin them again?”

“Ah! She’s right, town chief! What should we do...?!”  
Despair gripped the farmers once again.

“...Alright, I’ll think of how to handle the dragon. You guys just focus on raising the sugar beets.”

“Right!” they all said in unison. “We’ll leave the dragon to you, town chief!” *Yeah, I can’t tell any of you mobs apart.*

“Town chief, what do you intend to do?” asked Wozma, worried.

“Rokuko and I know a guy who knows even more about dragons than either of us. I’m gonna go ask him for advice.”  
I answered, and he nodded.

“I will handle the town while you are gone.”

“It won’t take that long. They’re, uh, pretty close to us.”

## **# Flame Cavems’ Perspective**

The [Flame Caverns] located within Tsia Mountain had a rare visitor. A red-colored dragon was stomping its way through the dungeon halls, made just big enough for Redra in her dragon form to fit through, while eating Magma Slimes along the way. It progressed straight to the stairs and went down, as if it had the dungeon layout entirely memorized. It took the shortest paths available and in no time reached the boss room on the fifth floor.

Normally there would be a midboss Red Minotaur lying in wait to fight off the intruder. But instead there was Redra the Red Dragon, the Dungeon Master and the last boss of the dungeon. The two dragons faced each other, then instinctively sucked in air. They were preparing to breathe fire — and at full power, too. Then, before long...

“GRAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!” They both let out sparkling bursts of fire at the exact same time. The pure white fire looked like beams of light, and they smashed together,

exploding and shooting up the temperature in the boss room. They temporarily shut their mouths to cut off their fire breath, then walked toward each other with their dragon claws leaving deep marks in the now molten ground.

Once close, they bumped noses happily.

"You've sure learned to breathe some alright fire! Guess you've been keeping up your training, Igni!"

"Of course, Mom! Who do you think I am?!"

"My daughter, duh! Hahaha!"

The dragons roared friendly roars. They were in truth mother and daughter, with Redra the Red Dragon being the mother and Igni the Flame Dragon being the daughter. This was the first time they were seeing each other in several decades. There popped up the father — Ittetsu, the Salamander Dungeon Core.

"Heya. How ya been, Igni?"

"Dad, I'm home! I've been great, super great!" Igni, with the enormous size of a Flame Dragon, tackled Ittetsu. Despite the fact that his daughter was bigger than him just like a four-wheeler big rig is bigger than a small commercial truck, Ittetsu had the pride of a father. He dug his back feet into the ground and used his tail to disperse the force of her tackle, taking it head on without being thrown away.

"You've sure grown a lot since I last saw you. Pretty sure you're gonna be bigger than Redra soon, yeah?"

"You think so? I think Mom just got smaller!"

"Like hell I did! Sheesh, kids these days grow way too fast! Though I'm still pretty young for a dragon, just saying!" Redra gave Igni's head a hug and dragon knuckle rub, which made her let out a childish giggle. That put the weight of two dragons on Ittetsu. He might have collapsed had he lacked the fatherly pride.

"Well hey, feel free to relax wherever. This place is still your home."

"Yeah! Oh, right. Mom, I wanna talk to you about something."

"Huh? About what?!"

"Lean over for a sec..." It seemed it was something she didn't want Ittetsu to hear. They parted from Ittetsu so Igni could whisper into Redra's ear.

"Th-There was this really amazing guy."

"An amazing guy, huh?"

"He wasn't afraid of me at all, and he pointed his sword at me!"

"A sword, huh?"

"Even though he was a human!"

"A human, huh? Huh huh huuuh?"

"I fell in love at first sight! I want to make him my mate!"

"Hell no! Who the fuck messed with my little Igni?!"  
roared Ittetsu, butting in with the full force of his protective fatherly nature.

"Dad, what?! Why were you eavesdropping?!"

"Hey, you were just talking so loud I couldn't help but hear it... Yeah, Redra?"

"Sure, you shoulda pretended not to hear! Igni's a young girl, she needs her privacy!" It seemed that Redra had gotten so emotional that she unconsciously started shouting.

"Can't believe my daughter fell in love with a human... but alright! That's fine with me!"

"Really? Yaaay!"

"Whoa, whoa, whoa, Redra! I'm her dad and I'm not letting this happen!"

"Why not?!"

The mother wished to support her daughter's love, and the father didn't wish to give his daughter to anyone. A classic family dispute had begun.

"Fact is, you're a fuckin' dragon, and he's a fuckin' human. How're you gonna make him your mate? You're not even the same species!"

"You and Mom are different species too! You're a fire spirit Salamander and she's a Red Dragon!"

"Ngh?!" Ittetsu could only grunt after she immediately shot down his core argument.

"You've sure grown a mouth, huh..."

"Ahaha! Looks like Igni's in the right here! So, who was the lucky guy? What's he like?"

"...I dunno!"

"Huh?" Even Redra, for all her support, had to pause in disbelief.

"I dunno, but he was strong enough to fight me! He was tiny!"

"How tiny?! We gotta know the details!"

"He was smaller than you, Dad, but he was strong!"

"Gahaha! All humans are gonna be smaller than me!" Ittetsu's mood brightened after he realized that meant she wouldn't be able to find him.

"Oh, and he even managed to hurt me! It was the first time anyone other than you or Mom managed to do that!"

"Huh?! He hurt my cute lovely amazing daughter?! Fuckin' hell! Bring him here right now so I can kill the hell out of him!" Ittetsu's mood darkened after he saw the slight cut on his daughter's neck.

"That's a sword cut! I guess he's a sword fighter, then?!"

"Well, I don't really remember him well, but I will if we fight again. Cause I mean, I'm in love with him!"

"I'm thinkin' you should remember a lot more than that... Sheesh, Igni. How many humans do you think live here?"

"A lot, but who cares? He's the only human strong enough to fight me! I'll find him in nooo time."

"Haaah..." Naturally, even Redra had to sigh at what an airhead her daughter was. And so ended the conversation about Igni's crush.

"You know, things sure have changed a lot around here," said Igni.

"Yeah. Been about thirty years since you've been here, Igni. Things are gonna fuckin' change. Like uuh, the city at the base of the mountain."

“That was there like a hundred years ago too. Oh, but there were some weaksauce humans walking on the mountain! I teased them a little! They panicked super hard and ran all over the place!”

“Uh?” Ittetsu stiffened as Igni began cackling. “Er, hey. About how far up the mountain were they?”

“About halfway up, I think. They were wearing clothes and they weren’t on fire. Their homes were nearby so I burned them too.” It was at that point that even Redra noticed.

“Hey... [112], were those humans, maybe, uh...”

“Probably. C’mere, Igni. You remember how to morph into human form, yeah?”

“Wha? Sure, Dad, but... Gaaah! Don’t pull my wings!”

Coincidentally, the [Cave of Greed] dungeon located beside them chose that moment to contact them. Ittetsu and Redra both cradled their heads.

## # Keima’s Perspective

And so, when I went to talk to Ittetsu, I found him with a little girl about Niku’s size. She had red scales on some parts of her body, hands and feet with reptilian claws, a tail like Ittetsu’s, and overall was the spitting image of Redra in human form, except a loli.

“Who the heck are you?” she asked.

“Shut it, Igni!”

“Ouchie!”

On top of that, it seemed like a whack from Ittetsu’s tail barely hurt her at all. *Yep, well. I know what that means.*

“Sorry about all that, Keima! Our stupid daughter sure gave you hell!” Ittetsu’s daughter was in fact the Flame Dragon that had burned those fields. He lowered his big lizard head.

“You actually had a kid, Ittetsu...? Wow. Well, don’t worry about it.”

“Yeah, it’s cute how she’s got a dumb side like Redr— I

mean, uh, it's a real shame she's dumb enough to mess with neighbors." Ittetsu looked my way, scratching his head before bowing it again.

"Dad?! Why're you bowing your head to a weak-looking human like him?"

"Shut it, idiot! This guy's my friend, and when you fuck with my friends you gotta apologize!"

"He's your friend, dad?! You have friends?! No way! All you do is hang out inside or flirt with Mom!"

"That's what you're surprised about?! C'mon! I only don't go outside 'cause I'm a Dungeon Core!"

*Good to see that they're so close to each other.* "Anyway, Ittetsu, I'm guessing she's the dragon that burnt up my fields."

"Y-Yup. Not much I can do for your dead but apologize for lettin' it happen... I'm hopin' you'll be fine settling this with some DP. Igni... uh, that's her name. You may not like this, but I've gotta ask you not to try and get revenge on her."

"Eh, well, it wasn't that bad. She burned some fields and houses, but nobody died. Definitely not enough for me to want to kill a child, seriously."

"Yeah? That's good to hear. Silver lining of all this, huh?" Ittetsu let out a sigh of relief. *What a good dad.*

"I'm not gonna ask you to forgive her just 'cause she's a kid. I want to make this fuckin' right. Tell me what you need and I'll see what I can do."

"Alright. I'm fine with you paying for the damages. But really, I just want Igni not to do anything like that again."

"You got that right. She's gonna be grounded for a bit, about five years."

*For a bit means five years to him? Nice sense of scale.* "Got it. That's all I really need." *Guess I'll tell Wozma that the dragon will be staying in the [Flame Caverns] for a while.*

"Sorry mister, I didn't know you were Dad's friend... Ummm, it won't happen again, uncle!"

*Uncle...? I mean, I guess that's one thing to call your dad's friend. "Sure, alright. I forgive you."*

"Wow, thank you! Also, uncle! Keep being friends with Dad, okay? Please! He doesn't have any other friends."

"Aw, you sure love your dad, huh?"

"H-Hey, you, shut it! I've got plenty of friends!"

*Now that she mentions it, I actually haven't seen Ittetsu with any of his friends... Can't say anything for sure since I don't know much about how Dungeon Cores hang out, though.*

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"I asked an expert on the subject and he said the dragon will probably be staying in the [Flame Caverns] for the next five years." After returning to Goren Town, I immediately informed Wozma of Igni being grounded in a roundabout way.

"Five years...?! But what would compel a famously erratic fire-element dragon to stay in place for five years?"

"Huh? Uhhh, well. Something about how Tsia Mountain's [Flame Caverns] are so plump with fire elementals that the dragon will have plenty of food."

"I see. When they have snacks — or, food — they don't need to travel. And he believes that food will run out in five years?"

"...I think it's more like the dragon will just get bored of it in five years? It's a dungeon, the food will probably never run out. But anyway, point being, we might as well just let sleeping dragons lie. It'll leave on its own eventually."

"I see. That is understandable, then. But may I ask the name of the dragon specialist you spoke to?"

*Oh crap, I didn't think of one. Time to ad-lib.* "It was Narikin. You know, Haku's friend."

"Goodness! Narikin isn't just a specialist in construction magic, he's even an expert on dragon behavior?! I see!" *Yep,*

*sure am glad everyone trusts Narikin just 'cause he's Haku's friend.* "In that case, I will inform the Adventurer's Guild and the townsfolk that they may rest easy."

"Yep, thanks. I'm counting on you."

"It will be done."

And so, the trouble caused by little Igni's surprise attack came to a close... or at least, I was the only one optimistic enough to believe that. It took several days before I finally realized nobody else intended to let it end there.

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"Huh? What's this about a Flame Dragon Extermination Request?" In the middle of a boring hour of stamping my signature on paperwork, I suddenly found one that stuck out. I decided to go ahead and ask Wozma about it.

"That is the paperwork asking for the Empire to send troops to exterminate the dragon in Tsia Mountain, of course." His answer was not surprising.

"...Uh, but I mean, the Flame Dragon's going to be chilling in the mountain for like five years."

"Yes. That means we know where it will be for five years. A perfect opportunity to exterminate it." *Uhhh... but I said to leave it alone. Crap, this is where being a figurehead isn't so easy. I've gotta try to convince him to give this up.*

"I'm vetoing this request. Leave the dragon alone. We don't want to risk it or other dragons coming for revenge."

"Hm, now that you mention it... understood. I will not send the request." *Wow, he sure backpedaled fast.*

"However, this is a bit problematic. I imagine that adventurers are already heading there to exterminate the Flame Dragon themselves."

"...What?" Nobody mentioned that to me. I asked for the details, and apparently a nearby adventurer had overheard Wozma as he informed the guild about the situation. Talk of the dragon spread like wildfire among adventurers. And

since more adventurers meant more firepower, the Guild actually encouraged that. The fact that word could spread so fast in this world without phones or the internet just went to show how fearsome dragons truly are. No doubt the mightiest of the monsters.

"Forgive me, town chief, this was my mistake." Wozma gave a deep bow.

"...Well, I'll go ask the expert if the dragon will mind a few adventurers coming after it."

"My apologies."

And so, it was back to the [Flame Caverns] meeting room. Ittetsu and I met there alone.

"Turns out some adventurers are coming here to try and hunt the Flame Dragon."

"...Say what?! Y'know I'm gonna have to kill you if they go after my family, yeah? She may be dumb, but she's my fuckin' daughter."

"Hey, I feel you. I would do the same thing. Most people would."

"Yeah... Wait, Keima. You had a kid with Rokuko or something? Gahaha, kids sure are cute, huh? Yeah?"

"Nonono, I haven't had any kids. Not a single one."

"Huh? And here I thought humans bred like fuckin' crazy."

I coughed to get the conversation back on track.

"Anyway, if any adventurers do come looking for a fight, feel free to kill them all."

"You got it. Hey, this is just gonna be some easy DP." Ittetsu gave a hearty laugh. Anyone traveling this far to hunt dragons was probably a real seasoned fighter, but if an ancient Dungeon Core like Ittetsu wasn't afraid then I sure wasn't.

"Dad! I heard everything!"

"What?"

Igni popped up out of nowhere, in this meeting room that could normally only be accessed by using dungeon functions. She was in human form, at least. *Wait. She looks*

*less dragon-like than before. Her hands and feet are more... human.*

"So basically, a human way stronger than most humans... In other words, *he* is coming here for me?!"

"He?"

"Uh... Keima, don't fuckin' worry about that. It's, uh. She's kinda sick."

"I'm not sick! It's love!" roared Igni indignantly, causing fire to envelop her body and shoot up the temperature of the room. *Holy crap, it's hot in here!*

"Quit it, Igni! Keima's got no fire resistance, you'll kill him!" Ittetsu immediately smacked Igni's head.

"Ngh! Sowwy..."

"Uhhh, well, just be a little more careful from now." I was {Ultra Transformed} into myself so that I could revive from an accident, but I would rather not die if I could help it. Not to mention, if the room got as hot as an oven I might die again right after reviving.

"I think I'll ask for a fire resistance scroll this time. How much are they?"

"Not too fuckin' expensive. Only 1,000,000 DP." *Yeah, that's pretty expensive to me. I wonder how rich he is to think that's only a little expensive.*

"Why's it so expensive? No way could I buy that myself."

"'Cause you'll burn alive with the max level. Igni and Redra's fire is as hot as it fuckin' gets."

"Seriously...? That's a dragon for you, I guess."

"Heheh! Yeah, I'm pretty amazing!" said Igni proudly.

"Don't get cocky!" The sound of a painful smack resounded through the room. If that had been my head, it would have burst right open. Even Igni was holding her head in pain.

"Ngggh, I won't lose to you, Dad! This love is real!"

"Hah! How's it real when you don't even know his name or face? I don't think you can even tell any humans apart." Ittetsu's taunt led to the room heating up again.

“Uh, Ittetsu, stop teasing your kid. It’s getting too hot. And by hot, I mean it’s like standing on the surface of the sun.”

“My bad. Igni, get a grip.”

“Gr, grrr...” The heat source cooling down didn’t change the already hot air, so I cast {Ice Bolt} on the wall to fix that. I didn’t modify it at all since Ittetsu was there too.

“That’s some weak magic. I guess all humans except my love really are weak,” said Igni with disappointment while looking at me. Which seemed to make Ittetsu want to tease her again.

“Heh, you’re in for a world of pain if you look down on Keima, alright? He beat me in a fight, y’know.”

“Wha?! You, Dad?! No way!”

“It’s a fact. Redra and I can’t hold a candle to ‘im.”

“Even Mom?! But he looks so weak!”

“Uh, Ittetsu? I just told you not to tease her too much. What’re you gonna do if she challenges me to a fight now?”

“Right! No way are you stronger than Mom and Dad! Fight me!” *See? What a pain.*

“Hey, what’s the problem? Go ahead and accept. You can set the rules and everything, alright? Have some fun with my daughter.” Ittetsu’s big lizard face broke out into a grin. Seemed he was completely confident that I would come out the victor.

“Alright, I’ll have some fun. But gimme 100 DP so I can buy some tools.”

“Comin’ right up.”

I took the DP Ittetsu gave me and used it to buy stacking blocks, straight rectangles that formed a square when three of them were lined up. I then stacked them while changing the direction they were going in each layer.

“What? Are those your weapon, uncle?”

“Nah, they’re just toys. Now, about our duel. We’ll take turns pulling out blocks from the tower. Whoever makes the tower collapse on their turn loses.” Indeed, it was Je\*ga.

*Time to see if her still-clawed half-dragon half-human hands can beat me. Oh, and no attacking the other player, or using anything but your hands on the tower.*



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And so, after becoming a Dragon Buster (of stacking blocks), I used my authority as victor to make Igni promise to try and not kill the adventurers who came to fight her, if at all possible. I didn't want to indirectly make the child of a friend a murderer if I could help it. Even though she was, uh, technically three-hundred years old.

Also, I gave her the blocks. They'll be good practice for her human form. She'll get better at using her fingers, and since getting heated will burn the blocks, she'll have to learn to stay calm in human form. I prepared plenty of spares for her, so she should be fine for a few days. Unless she burns them all in one go.

Anyway, I went to give Wozma an update in the bar.

"Hey, Wozma, turns out it's probably gonna be okay. He said a few adventurers going in won't be a big problem. Though he can't guarantee they'll come out alive."

"I see! That is a relief..." Wozma put a hand on his chest and sighed.

"Huh? What brings you here, Keima?"

"Gozou, huh. Nothing much, I just got back from asking a dragon specialist some stuff." I gave Gozou a brief explanation as he chugged his beer like always.

"Alright, so you're saying we can all go hunt the dragon and the town'll be fine?"

"I guess, but uh, don't. You'll all die."

"Gahaha, we wouldn't go on our own. But with Wataru, things are different. We might just win if you come along too, Keima."

"Sorry, but I'm not crazy enough to risk my life for nothing."

"Same here. And hey, that means we can just go hunt Iron Golems like normal." Right. And you know, the townsfolk really didn't seem nervous or panicky at all. *Gotta*

*say, I'm impressed they're keeping their cool when a dragon is so close.*

"Huh? Y'know that there's a legendary Red Dragon that lives in Tsia Mountain, right? What's another dragon on top of that?"

"...Oh, I didn't know there was a legend like that."

"There's a pretty famous song that goes like, 'There beee a red-scaled dragoon deep in the [Flame Cavernsss]', y'know. Never heard it?" Nope. *And today I learned that Redra is a legendary Red Dragon of which songs are sung.*

"Some say she's a god protecting the whole country."

"Seriously? I had no idea." *You're a guardian goddess, Redra. Congratulations.*

"Though to us it's just a shut-in that's never left its mountain in the whole time we've been alive. I've only heard of it in the song, and who knows, maybe it's dead by now."

"N-Neat." *Redra, you're such a shut-in that people aren't even sure if you're still alive...*

"Hey, what're the chances that the Flame Dragon is that legendary dragon, and it's actually been away from home until now?"

"...Either way, we know for sure a dragon's in Tsia Mountain now. Lots of people out there forming parties to try to take it down." *Yeah, makes sense. They want the prestigious title of Dragon Buster. But is it really worth it, honestly?*

"Wozma, how many people do you think are gonna come here?"

"Let's see... quite a few, I believe. We may want to devise a plan for dealing with them." *That many, huh? But uh... how many is "quite a few," exactly?*

"Alright. Good luck, Wozma."

"I will do my best, but I will expect your help, town chief." *Anyway, time to sleep while Wozma takes care of everything.*

Several days passed after I made that decision. And

indeed, reckless adventurers seeking glory came to our town one after another.

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The first problem occurred in the Dancing Doll Inn.

"I'm telling you, give us the best room you got!"

"Haaah... Like I saaaaid..."

On my way to grab some grub from the cafeteria, I heard an argument at the receptionist desk. I went over to see what was up and saw five buff adventurers glaring at Neruneh over the counter. She seemed kinda bored, but the dudes looked like they were one step away from getting violent. *Good grief.*

"Hey. What's happening, Neruneh?"

"Ah, Masteeer. These, um, customeeers? They want to use the best room we haaave."

The five dudes glared at me. "You're the boss around here?!" They yelled, but I didn't flinch. The fact I wasn't scared at all probably showed that they were no big deal. Ittetsu's yells were ten times as loud and intimidating.

"That's right. I don't see any problem with letting you use the room if no one else is, but what's the problem?"

"Well, the thing iiis, they're saying they won't pay for it."

"Ah. That means they're not customers. Listen, buds, this is an inn. You gotta pay for the rooms to stay here."

"Shut it! This inn'll get famous as hell if we stay in it, so you better give us the room now while we're still in a good mood!" *The hell is wrong with this guy? And what's wrong with his four companions for not stopping him?*

"You must be pretty famous to say that, huh."

"Yup. Believe it or not, we're all Dragon Busters."

"Sorry, never heard of you. I'm not too familiar with adventurer groups. What's your party name?"

"The Thunder Gods of Super Mega Thunder, hell yeah!"  
The five of them flexed their arms to show identical tattoos.

The ink was artistically styled like lightning in a way that even some Japanese tattoos were. *But uh, that's one weird party name. At least it'll stick in my memory.*

"Heh, too afraid to even speak, huh?"

"Even this backwater town's heard of how the five of us hunted a wyvern, I see."

"Hah. My muscles speak for themselves."

"How about that room then?"

*Eeeh. These guys sure jump to conclusions. I guess they are technically Dragon Busters if they took down a wyvern, but... wyverns seem kinda weak.*

"By the way, what rank are you all?"

"Listen and be amazed. All five of us are C-Ranks! Our party rank surely matches that of a B-Rank." *I like that he had to say 'surely' to avoid stating something untrue as a fact.*

"Five C-Ranks forming the party The Thunder Gods of Something Something? Sorry, never heard of you. Pay or get out."

"Say what?! We're doing you a favor here! Just give us the room!"

"I will if you pay. A night in our best room is, well... with five people, one hundred and twenty-five golds."

"Huh?! Why's it that expensive?!"

"Grab a normal room if you're too poor for it. Those are just fifty coppers a night, so it'll be two silvers and fifty coppers a night for you all. Food is separate, by the way."

"I see, this inn is a tourist trap. We must deliver upon it the judgment of the Thunder Gods." The lankiest and smartest-looking of the buff dudes cracked his knuckles.

"Neruneh, looks like these aren't customers. Deal with them by the book."

"Okaaay. Go forth, my cute little golem." Neruneh clapped her hands and a Clay Golem I made appeared from behind the counter. On its arm was the band of the Adventurer's Guild.

“Hell yeah. Time for a fight.”

“No, way. Tch. That’s a Guild armband.” There weren’t as many now as there used to be, but in the past a ton of violent customers came trying to stay for free. The Adventurer’s Guild’s armband always proved very effective here. If it didn’t work, we still had the option of just reporting them directly. A loud shout here would be audible to the Adventurer’s Guild next door.

“Our inn works with the Adventurer’s Guild, so yeah. Even the prices for the rooms were decided on by a higher up in the Guild. If you’ve got a problem with them, bring it to the Guild.” After all, Haku herself had said that the grand suite should be priced at twenty-five golds a night. Letting someone stay for free without good reason would just be a slap in the face for Haku. *Oh, and the wedding earlier was framed as Rokuko footing the bill, so it was totally fine.*

“By the way, if you wanna stay at a cheaper inn... I’d recommend you go back to Tsia and look for one.”

“Like hell we’re gonna go back this late! Gah, can’t believe you’re ripping us off. This is why I hate country bumpkins.” *What city did these losers come from?*

Anyway, they settled on staying in a normal room. They all chose E-Rank meals (50 coppers each), which totaled five silvers with their rooms. But, well, our inn was good enough to justify the price, so I didn’t feel bad in the least.

The next day, it happened at dinnertime again.

“How many times must I say it! Give us your best room!”

“Bro, get it through your thick-ass skull that it costs twenty-five golds a night per person. If you wanna sleep there, pay up.”

The voices were different this time. I wandered over and saw that a party of three elf-eared individuals — two male, one female — were blasting Ichika.

“We’ve giving you the opportunity to house the great Eternal Beauties! At least drop the price to one gold!”

“Shut it! You friggin’ stupid morons! Quit trying to haggle

and just go for the friggin' normal rooms!" *Uh, Ichika, I think you might be blowing up a bit too hard.* Not that I can really blame you.

"Hey-hey, what's going on?"

"Oh, Master. Good timing."

"So, you're in charge around here!"

They were even less intimidating than the five from yesterday. Probably because they were lanky elves. But anyway, looked like we had some more whiners on our hands.

"We are the B-Rank adventurer party, the Eternal Beauties!"

"B-Rank, huh?" That meant they were in fact a part of the nobility. Being a little polite should be the right idea here.

"And yet you will not pay the twenty-five-gold room fee? Or seventy-five for the three of you, rather. The price is certainly high for an adventuring party. But you do not seem to be average adventurers."

"...We simply do not believe that this inn could be worth seventy-five golds." His voice softened a bit, perhaps since I had indirectly complimented them.

"Then please stay at another inn, honorable adventurer. We have only our grand suite and normal rooms, so if you would like neither, we cannot provide any service to you. You may choose another inn at your leisure."

"Ngh... You know there's no other inn!" *Oh, but there are in Tsia. Though there are no more carriages going back there today.*

"It is quite alright, Oreta. You needn't argue for my sake any longer."

"B-But, Princess Chiroli..."

"Conda, please pay for the normal rooms."

"Princess! I could never force you to stay in the same rooms that these commoners use...!" *Princess, huh? Seems like she's royalty, but I'm just gonna pretend I didn't hear anything. Oh, or maybe rich noble daughters are called*

*princess too? She might just be on the level of the archduke.*

"We have come this to this distant land to defeat the wicked dragon that plagues your innocent people. Forgive us, sir, for causing a stir." The female elf bowed her head apologetically. Seemed that she had an actual head on her shoulders.

"No problem at all. And by the way, our inn has an onsen — a bath, albeit a shared one. Feel free to visit it as much as you like."

"Oh my, a bath!"

"Ngh... To think that the princess would be forced to lower her head..."

"Dude, you're the one who was such an ass she felt the need to apologize, alright? If I were you, I'd be beating myself up for being such a ginormous shithead." *Ichika going in for the kill.*

"By the way, food is priced separately, but there does exist a menu for those who choose not to eat meat."

"I see. Thank you for your consideration. Though it is merely superstition that elves only eat vegetables." *Wait... really? Uh, well, the menu's still useful since I'm sure someone in this world is vegetarian! Even though nobody like that has shown up before! I'm fully confident that there's a tribe of vegan beastkin out there!*

And of course, the next day during dinnertime, it happened yet again.

"I shan't argue with a slave! Summon your owner!" *Yup, here I am.*

A plump looking guy was yelling at Niku over the receptionist's counter. *Alright, remember to call her by her other name.*

"What's going on here, Kuro?"

"I told him he couldn't stay, so he got mad." *Someone else trying to stay for free, I guess.*

"So you are the owner of this inn! I will have you know that you are a failure of a businessman!"

"You think so?" *Honestly, I don't have much to say to that. I'm an adventurer, not a businessman.* Or uh, I'm a pope. I guess a pope being a failure of a businessman is actually a good thing. "Anyway, what seems to be the problem?"

"I traveled all this way, and yet this slave says there are no rooms for me to stay in." *Hmmm, this guy seems more like a merchant than an adventurer.*

"Well, the prices for our inn are twenty-five gold for the grand suite and fifty coppers for a night in the normal rooms."

"I have already been told! But when I tried to stay in a normal room, I was informed there are no empty rooms!"

"Wha?" *Pretty sure our inn has twenty whole normal rooms.* "Kuro, is that true?"

"Yes, all the normal rooms are filled. Only the grand suite is open." *Wow, all rooms filled. We sure are making a killing off this.*

"I see. So you can't stay because all the rooms except the grand suite are filled."

"Indeed. The fault for this predicament lies with your establishment. It follows that it's your responsibility to lower the price of the grand suite to make up for this blunder, no? Hmm?" *An interesting point. So basically, he's saying it's our fault that there are no rooms for him to stay in even though he wants to, and thus we should let him stay in the grand suite for free. Man, it always comes down to cheapos trying to haggle, huh?*

"I decline. Our grand suite is worth its price and no less."

"Empty rooms have a high opportunity cost. It would be more profitable to let me stay in the grand suite, even if not at full price. Am I wrong?" *You might be right in the short term. However...*

"If I lower the price here, future customers will demand to stay for the same price you did. Lowering the price permanently for this would cause greater losses overall in

the long term.”

“I will keep this a secret, then. Shall I prepare a contract? I am more than willing.” The merchant grinned. *Geez, this guy sure is a pain. Nobody going this far to stay for cheap could be a good guy. It’s people like this that would, like, steal the futons and stuff.*

“There’s also our pride. Not to mention that we would be disrespecting the previous customers that paid full price.”

“I find it unlikely that anyone of note has visited your backwater inn! Surely you are just exaggerating the visit of some impoverished noble!” *Oh, you’re gonna go there? Guess that leaves me no choice but to play the ace up my sleeve.*

“The Ivory Goddess has stayed here. She was our first customer, and advised us to set the price to twenty-five golds a night. Dinner being a separate five golds. After her visit we have had three Heroes stay there as well.” The moment I established that our inn was Ivory-approved, the merchant trembled. Incidentally, I was the third Hero there, but he didn’t need to know that.

“D-D-D-Do not lie to me. The Ivory Goddess herself, in this backwater town?”

“It’s true, we have connections. And her visiting is a pretty famous tale, just ask around the bar and you’ll see.” In the first place, the public understanding was that Haku paid to have this inn built since she frequently visited the land here. Honestly, it would be fair to say that we didn’t even have to take any customers other than Haku. In any case, it was a fact that our inn had the Ivory Goddess’s personal seal of approval. I wouldn’t object to anyone calling our inn officially sanctioned by the Laverio Empire.

“It’s... true?”

“Yep. I don’t mind writing a contract to say I’ll give your money back if the Ivory Goddess hasn’t stayed here.” Now it was my turn to bring up contracts as a sign of honesty.

“I-I see. Forgive my rudeness, then. I will pay twenty-five

golds for the room... if you would have me. I won't regret spending twenty-five golds to stay in a room that the Ivory Goddess herself has blessed."

"Roger that. Take'm up there, Kuro."

"Okay."

The merchant proceeded to order an A-Rank dinner for five golds on top of that. *Wow, he's got that much money? I thought he wasn't that special since he came here alone without a single servant or guard.*

Incidentally, on checkout he seemed pretty satisfied, saying that the room and food were worth even more than thirty golds. He left the grand suite in pretty good condition, so if he ever came again, sure, I wouldn't mind letting him stay there again.

*But anyway, wow. This is the first time since founding the inn that we've ever run out of rooms. Maybe I should get a sign to put on the front door when we're out of rooms. Yeah, I'll go make one.*

...And so, day after day our Dancing Doll Inn was experiencing problem after problem. Naturally, not all customers were so easy to talk down, and we had to go directly to the Guild more than a few times. The troublemakers in question would blast the Guild, get arrested, and pay a fine. Naturally, they didn't get to stay in the inn. They were sent out of town, no matter how dark it was outside.

In the event of merchants causing trouble, the worst-case scenario was me threatening to use my authority as town chief to label them as criminals and confiscate their wealth. Maiodore, the daughter of Tsia's archduke, had given her approval ahead of time for doing exactly that. As of yet, no merchant hadn't backed down after hearing that threat.

*I just wish I didn't have to get involved every single time there was trouble...*



Anyway, stuff happened and now our inn was all filled up. There were so many people drawn by the prestige of dragon hunting that we couldn't handle them all. Not to mention all those nursing their wounds in our rooms after challenging the dragon and losing. Though in some cases, their rooms were taken the second they left for battle. The exorbitantly wealthy A-Rank party The Golden Radishes stayed in the grand suite, but they were sent packing by Igni the very next day.

Many of the wounded adventurers had left already, satisfied just by being able to brag about having fought a dragon and lived. They had at least managed to avoid ending up in crushing poverty after getting all of their equipment melted, but still, I wasn't sure how far that bragging would take them.

The people who had died challenging the [Flame Caverns] all passed away to the traps and monsters within it. Igni was keeping her promise and letting the challengers leave alive. That must mean the adventurers weren't strong enough to even come close to posing a risk.

*...But y'know, a lot of people here have some weird party names. I wonder if the auto-translator is having some fun. Or maybe these people are really just that lame? Either way, the inn's been packed for so many days that they are starting to go sleep in the dungeon's Inn of Greed. If you said those rooms were too small to be called actual inn rooms, you'd be right. Time to ask the vice chief for help.*

"Heya, Wozma. What's going on here? The inn's at full capacity and that's hurting our D— income."

"M-My apologies, town chief. I am currently investigating the possibility of letting people stay in the town residents' homes." Wozma was busily carrying around beer and food in his bar. *Wait... So he hasn't done anything to fix it yet?*

"You seem pretty busy."

"I have no excuse. Despite my best efforts, I have been as swamped, as you can see." The inn was packed with regulars, with only the grand suite being left open. It made sense that the bar would be filled with dragon-hunting adventurers too.

The problem was, they were way too overconfident. What else would you expect from people cocky enough to try to hunt dragons? Incidentally, a lot of them were eating in the bar since food at the inn was so expensive.

"Wozma, is the fried food for table three done yet?!"

"Wozma, two ales for this table!"

"Ah, coming right up...! Sorry, town chief. My hands are as full as yours. May I ask for some assistance in dealing with this problem?" *Wait, I've never seen that beastkin waitress before. I guess he's hiring some part-timers. Can't blame him when he has this many customers.*

"Uhhh, I mean, I guess I could direct some people to the church... but that wouldn't fix things for long. How about we have them put up tents in the plaza and outside the town?"

"I see... That's what people did before the town was established, how nostalgic. Let us inform the guild where tents are permitted, then." And so it was settled. Wozma was so busy that I had to go to the guild myself, but... well, I wasn't *that* work-averse.

I popped up at the guild and saw that there was actually a line leading to the counter. Seemed that they were just as busy as we were.

"Heeey, is Cilia here? There's something I want to report to the guild."

"Town chief! You've come at the perfect time. I hate to ask, but could you lend us a little money?" Cilia the guild receptionist called me over the second I popped in.

"Wait, what?"

"We attempted to buy the items these adventurers have with them, but we lack the money for it." In front of her were three adventurers, each looking like a storied veteran of war.

I hadn't seen any of them before. They were likely yet more people after the dragon.

"Can't believe the guild here can't afford items this bad. Or maybe it's just that we're too good for this place, huh?"

"No point forcin' it, boss. Let's go look for some place that's got a little more money."

"Heh, you got that right."

It seemed that they had brought with them some fairly expensive materials from monsters that they had hunted on the way here. But the guild lacked the funds to buy all of it.

"Why not just put more money in their guild bank accounts?"

"The problem is that they wish to be paid with physical money, and immediately." *I wonder why they brought all this stuff at once.* "They could have sold the items in Tsia's guild building, but instead they went all the way to this branch office and are demanding direct payment... I would guess that they merely wish to brag about having hunted such expensive materials that the guild could not afford to buy them." *Ah, makes sense. They could go around talking about how they're great adventurers and all that. Not sure what the ultimate point of that would be, and they're kind of proving the exact opposite by pulling this at all, but sure.*

"The items are all older than I would expect from something they hunted recently as well..." *So, you're saying they probably went out of their way to buy these expensive materials.*

"Hey, I heard that! We hunted this Mandragora in Tsia's dungeon on the way here. It's just dry 'cause we cast {Dry} on it! How about you stop trying to pin false charges on us. Now, buy it all! Give us the money!" Cilia's efforts to avoid divulging personal information had been ruined by the adventurers themselves bragging.

"Alright, I understand everything. Consider the money lent. How much do you need?"

"One hundred golds."

“Haha! We’re in a rush, so we’ll wait exactly ten minutes for you. You couldn’t afford that much money even if you scrounged up every silver and copper in town!”

“Uh-huh. Anyway, here’s the money.” I handed over a gold pouch that I had stashed in my {Storage}. I had left it there ever since Wataru gave it to me, so it was exactly one hundred golds.

“...Huh?” The adventurers gave grunts of shock, which Cilia ignored while counting the money.

“Yes, that will do. Thank you, town chief. I will return it in full tomorrow with an interest rate of—”

“Eh, don’t worry about interest, that’s more effort than it’s worth. We both help each other out. The bigger deal is getting this transaction finished fast, they’re in a hurry. I’ll leave another bag here in case you need it.”

“...Thank you. In any case, here is your payment.”

“W-Wait, hold on.”

“No need to explain, I know you are in a hurry. Here you are. We await your return. Next, please.” Cilia finished their business with merciless speed, ignoring their attempts to stop her. The line moved forward.

Incidentally, Mandragora roots of that size and age could be bought at specialized stores for about two hundred gold. They would have just lost a huge amount of money if they had just bought it at a store, but that wasn’t relevant here. They hunted it themselves and made a hundred gold! *Hey, how about you three use those on my inn’s grand suite? We love customers with money on hand!*

“...H-Hey, boss, what’re we gonna do about this?!”

“We’ve gotta pay full price if we don’t bring it back, right?! We’re gonna be enslaved and—”

“N-No... My perfect plan...”

*Oh, looks like you won’t be able to afford it. My bad.*

“Oh, right, Cilia. I want to talk about setting up space for tents outside.” I finished my own business with Cilia, then went back to the inn.

*Actually, it might be a good idea to close the game room for a bit and use it as a place for sleeping on the ground. Maybe twenty-five coppers a night or so.*

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Anyway, all the dragon hunting adventurers were swarming the dungeon as well.

"If you're just gonna sleep anyway, Keima, could you help me with this?"

"Huh?"

Rokuko took me to the Master Room. *What's all this about?*

"Take a look."

"...That's a lot of red." The monitor, projected onto an entire wall, was showing the maps of the second floor, third floor, and the labyrinth area with all of the adventurers on them. There were a lot of adventurers there. Each red dot signified an invader, and just to repeat, there were a lot of them. So many that we could barely even move the golem walls to manipulate the true path through the maze, ruining the area's entire gimmick.

"We're busy controlling golems and getting items to people staying in the Inn of Greed. There are a few people getting past the staircase area too, so you'll need to restock the Golem Blades there."

"...Right. Seems like the dungeon's just as busy as the inn." It turned out that dragon hunters who failed in their goal turned to our dungeon to make some cash or bring souvenirs back with them. The inn was packed and the space set aside for camps was steadily filling up, which led some to form camps in the dungeon. There was a line of people waiting their turn in the Inn of Greed to get items. Some fights broke out with other people skipping in line, but honestly, I didn't really care. *Man, there's so much to do.*

"Where's Rei and the others?"

“Rei’s at the church. Kinue and Neruneh are at the inn.” Niku, Ichika, and the Silkies were at the inn, too. The church was also getting an influx of followers, as you might expect. So much so that we had to temporarily take down the bookshelves due to all of the thieves looking to make a quick buck by stealing the books. They were falling into our anti-theft traps (golems that opened into pits if someone brought a marked book to the door) so much that we decided to just let the nuns lend books to actual villagers who asked for them.

Incidentally, the nuns were experiencing some pretty bad sexual harassment. I ultimately decided to let the Succubi decide for themselves how to deal with it, though it was hard to imagine how they would avoid harassment when wearing nun outfits like that. Even the new ones I had given them at the wedding ceremony were barely covering anything anymore.

*...Ehhh. Yeah, lots of stuff to do.*

“Rokuko, how do you feel about summoning monsters to help run the dungeon?”

“...Well, I was thinking that I couldn’t keep doing things myself much longer.” And so, we unanimously (two votes) decided to summon a new monster to help run the dungeon.

Since they would be working in the shadows, we didn’t need to worry about how they looked. We could summon a horribly disfigured monster and it would be totally fine as long as it was intelligent enough. For a second I considered the possibility of a Tentacle Slime like Mr. Tent that couldn’t talk, but a minion that couldn’t talk would be no good minion at all. Which is why we started talking about another Silky, but...

“H-Hey, Keima. I have a request.”

“...What’s up, Rokuko? Why’re you breathing so hard?”

“Just once. Just a single time is fine. But could you please let me, um, roll the 100,000 DP gacha?” asked Rokuko, a wild light in her eyes.

"That's not exactly an idea I like. I'm the kind of guy that likes guarantees, not chance."

"Just once! Please, just once!" *Well... thanks to all of the people flooding in here, especially the ones strong enough to try challenging a dragon, our daily DP income had shot through the roof. Which logically means that so has our store of DP. The dungeon as a whole (including the inn and so on) is producing twenty to thirty thousand DP a day. Which means that yes, we do have the funds to roll the 100,000 DP gacha, but...*

"Keimaaa... Pleaaaaase, let me have this?"

"...Ngh!" *Begging with puppy dog eyes?! No, my heart! It trembles!* Rokuko pursed her lips tightly as I struggled internally.

"...Do I have to grovel? Do I need to do that groveling thing you've done sometimes? Do I need to do it in my birthday suit?"

I laughed in shock. I didn't even think, I just let out a stunned laugh.

"Alright, alright. You can roll it, just don't get naked."

"Bwuh? Oh, wait, birthday suit means naked. C-Come on, you should know I wouldn't have done that!" Rokuko punched my chest lightly with bright red cheeks to hide her embarrassment. *Don't use your {Japanese} skill if you still suck at it, c'mon.* But in any case, I crumbled beneath Rokuko's passionate pleas and ultimately gave her permission to roll the 100,000 DP gacha once.

"Yaaay! I love you, Keima!"

"...N-No problem."

"K-Kinda makes me feel embarrassed when you get shy about it like that." It was time for Rokuko to roll the gacha. I had given her permission in the heat of the moment, but I did believe that with her luck Rokuko would get the perfect monster for the job her first try.

"Here we go, 100 Keima Gacha! Gimme something good!"

"Please, give us something that can fix this problem

instantly! Also, don't turn me into a unit of currency!"

Rokuko activated the 100,000 DP gacha, and instantly the room darkened. I wasn't sure I had seen the Master Room ever darken before... *Oh man, the 100,000 DP gacha sure knows how to get you hyped!*

The sound of thunder roared through the room and a needless pillar of light beamed out of the magic circle. *With flashy effects like these, we might just be summoning the Demon King... Oh, wait, there's a whole faction of Demon Kings. And we're enemies. Never mind that.*

And then, the monster finally appeared.

"Ummm?" There sat a kid about Niku's size — with red scales dotting her legs and a Salamander-esque tail sprouting from her, looking entirely as if she were a dragon that was working hard to master her human transformation. And there was a Je\*gga block in her hand. *Wait, uhhh. This girl looks kinda familiar.*

"Wait, uncle? What're you doing here?"

"...You're Igni, right?"

"Uh-huh. But... wait, where am I?" Igni spun her head around, taking in her surroundings. *Huh. Looks like it's really her, all dressed up with a fancy golden armband on her left arm.*

I looked at Rokuko and saw that her lips were twitching.

"This is... the dragon I've always wanted, right?"

"Yep. Go give her back."

"No way! We're gonna raise her here! I've already decided on a name! She's Karen!"

"She's Igni! Don't go around naming other people's daughters!" It seemed that Rokuko was panicking too. I knew that she knew who Igni was, since Redra had already introduced them. "And what the hell is wrong with that gacha?! Why did it summon our neighbor's daughter?!"

"Ummm. What should I do?" asked Igni.

"Just hold on a second."

"Oh, okay. Um... Uncle, got any more blocks?"

I gave her another Je\*ga set to shut her up. What a nightmare. We dumped 100,000 DP into the gacha, and sure, we got a Flame Dragon (three hundred years old). But that dragon's our neighbor's daughter. And she's the source of all our recent troubles. *Sure, she can fix a lot of our problems, but come on! This isn't right! This isn't what we wanted! Read the mood a little, gacha!*

"Awww, do I really have to? Do I really need to give her back?" Rokuko trembled as she looked up with tearful eyes. But really, thinking logically, what else could we do?

"...Imagine, for a second, that you and I have a kid."

"Ah! A-A kid with you, Keima? Eheheh..."

"That's right. They're ours. Now imagine that one day, out of nowhere, that they suddenly disappear, taken by another dungeon's gacha. And they get their name changed on top of that."

"...Okay, we'll give her back." *That's the empathy I like to see.* "But only if I get to roll the gacha again! Just once more! I'll definitely get something good this time, definitely!"

"...I dunno, 100,000 DP really is a lot." I fell into thought.

"I don't mind giving up on snacks for a bit! I won't eat so many melon rolls!"

"...Just one more, alright?" She was begging so much like a desperate child that I couldn't help but nod. 100,000 DP was several centuries worth of melon rolls, but her desperation was hard to resist.

"Yaaay! I love you, Keima!"

"I kinda feel like this is gonna be a heavy hit to our DP ranking, though."

"Who cares about that?! It's time for gacha! Yippee!" *Is she a gambling addict? Uhhh, well, this'll be the last time she does it either way, so...*

"Ummm, uncle. Should I get out of the way?"

"Yeah, that'd be smart. Go hang in a corner or something, sorry."

“Okaaaay.”

“Here I go! Gimme the good stuff, 100,000 DP gachaaaa!”  
Igmi moved aside and Rokuko rolled the 100,000 DP gacha again.

This time a magic circle exploded out with a burst, then slowly shrunk down. *Oh, it’s different from last time. I think this is the same thing that happened with Phenny? In which case, I guess all that thunder and stuff was for an SSR roll. Would expect nothing less for a Flame Dragon, I guess.*

And this time, what we got was an elf wearing shabby clothes in tatters like a slave might wear... and given that her entire body was transparent, she was probably dead.

“...Is this a Ghost?”

“Looks like a Ghost. Wait, hold on. I feel like I’ve seen her before...” I definitely had, but where? Some elves passed by recently, but I was thinking even further back. It didn’t take long to shrink down the possibilities.

She was an elf, and she was a slave. Dead, too, by the looks of it. These hints led straight to the only possible answer in my memory. Indeed, she was the elf who had been for sale in the same slave market as Ichika. Her name was Elulu, if I remembered correctly, and Dragon Suzuki the Hero had killed her.

“...Wait, you’re... Ichika’s master, aren’t you?” she said in a kinda sleepy tone after we made eye contact. “Where am I...? Did you save me?” *Well. Looks like she remembers everything, except what happened after she died.*

“Not so sure about the saving you part, but well, how much do you remember? Seems like you remember me, so...” I pointed at myself, and Elulu began listing off her memories with a finger on her chin.

“How much? Let’s see... Master Dragon stabbed me through the stomach, and... abandoned me?! W-Wait, why is my body transparent?!” She did indeed remember right up to the point where Suzuki stabbed her, and halfway through recounting her memories she realized she was a ghost.



"Uhhh, well. This is kinda hard to say, but you died."

"I suppose I did. But wait. Does that mean I'm a Ghost now? Whaaat... Did you not bury me?" *I, uh, definitely did. Maybe I didn't bury her the right way?*

"By the way, it's been over a year since you died."

"...Whaaaat?" It seemed like her mind was racing to process the situation she was in. I would probably do the same if I ended up as a ghost. Though really, the main thing I was taking from this is that here, the dead did speak, and that opened up a lot of potential problems for me. No longer could I blab about my evil plots before killing a Hero, for fear of them returning as a ghost and revealing everything.

"U-Um. What happens now? Are you going to exorcise me?"

"I kinda have some work for you to do, but..." Who knew if Ghosts would be good workers. Would she disappear if {Purification} were cast on her?

"Um... Well, I mean, you did try your best to save me back then, so I wouldn't exactly hate serving you, I mean, definitely not. But now that I'm a Ghost, um, how could I service you?"

"Service?" said Rokuko. "You mean like by doing your job? I'm definitely not sure if Ghosts can hold things. Keima, go test it out." *She's considered a dungeon monster now, so worst-case scenario I should be able to let her use the menu and move the golems through it, but that would limit her to only doing work through the menu.*

"Uncleee, can I go home nooow?" *Oh right, I forgot about Igni.*

"Bring the blocks over here. I want to see if Ghosts can stack them."

"Got it! I'm gonna win this time!" And so, Igni, Elulu, and for some reason Rokuko all played a game of Je\*ga.

Elulu was pretty quick to accept that she had died and turned into a Ghost, so she went right to testing the limits of her new body. She learned that she could grab the blocks

with no issue. She could also phase through them if she didn't focus on grabbing them, and with a little expertise she could grab only her selected block while phasing through the rest of the tower. Naturally, Igni lost the game. *Hooray, now Rokuko and Elulu are Dragon Busters too (in Je\*ga).*

"Oh! Since I became a ghost through murder, do I need to get revenge on Master Dragon before I can rest in peace?"

"Huh? I mean, is that just something you want to do? Or are Ghosts actually bound to that way of life?" Wait, *way of life* is a poor phrase to use here. Way of... death?

"Umm, well, Master Dragon... or rather, Dragon gave me a painful death, so I feel like it would be wrong to not kill him if he's still alive. Dragon might be my mortal enemy."

"Wha? Elulu, you want to fight me?" Igni stood up happily, having misunderstood the context for the name Dragon.

"No. Sit down. You've got the wrong dragon." I explained to Igni that there existed a Hero named Dragon Suzuki. Luckily, we managed to clear up her misunderstanding without any funny mishaps.

"Wow! That's surprising!"

"Goodness, Igni, why would I ever view you as an enemy? Ahaha!"

"Well, you know, I am a Flame Dragon after all! Kind of an easy mistake to make! Ahaha!"

"Ahahahahaha. Wait, what? Really?" *Oh, did I not mention that Igni's a Flame Dragon in human form?*

I explained who Igni was to Elulu. She believed me when Igni canceled her transformation and turned into a full-sized Flame Dragon. At the cost of passing out from shock, though. *Today I learned Ghosts can pass out.*

"Heeey, Elulu, wake uuup," said Igni.

"...Look, Keima, she's hitting the Ghost with her bare hands."

"Is it normal to touch Ghosts like that? Maybe she can

touch it since she's basically a walking avatar of the fire element." Incidentally, my own hands went right through her. But Rokuko could touch her just fine. Maybe that had to do with her Dungeon Core blood or whatever.

Elulu woke up after Rokuko and Igni poked her cheeks enough. "Ah...! P, P-P-Please forgive me honorable Flame Dragon! I am not worthy of being in the presence of a true dragooooon!"

"Don't be shy, we're friends now! Just call me Igni!"

"U-Understood! Lady Igniii!"

"Well, I don't mind the lady part! I am stronger than you, after all!"

Elulu went crazy with fear as soon as she learned that Igni was a dragon. Maybe that was trauma from Suzuki? Nah, that was probably just how normal people reacted to dragons. Igni nodded in satisfaction at Elulu's fright.

"You didn't notice that I was a dragon, and that means my human morphing is perfect! Basically, I'm amazing! I'm the strongest!" *That was definitely one way of looking at it.*

"Goodness, Suzuki certainly put me through hell! He must be punished!" She swapped over to Suzuki since it would be confusing to keep calling him Dragon with an actual dragon around. She used to call him Suzuki anyway, and only switched to Master Dragon after getting yelled at, so really this was one way of spiting him.

"By the way, Suzuki's buried alive inside a stone wall right now."

"What?" Only once Elulu was mostly calmed down did I explain where the target of her vengeance was.

"He's been buried in that wall for over a year now. Honestly, I'm amazed he's still alive."

"Wait, hold on. How did that happen?" *Oh, did I not mention that I did that?*

I explained how I had buried him alive, which made Elulu give a conflicted expression I didn't know how to describe.

"...I-I guess my vengeance is over already, then. Being

buried alive in stone is like torture, you know. You're a bit scary. But thank you for using a mannequin that looks like me to bait him. I feel satisfied... But then, why am I a Ghost?"

"Er, like I said, I kinda want you to work for the dungeon." I went ahead and explained that I was a Dungeon Master, and that she had been summoned as a dungeon monster.

"It was just by chance that we summoned you, though. Want us to look for a way to exorcise you instead? I'd want you to work while we figured that out, though."

"Well, I don't mind working. Keima... Master, you were forced to help the dungeon after being summoned just like this, right? I want to help too!" Elulu was full of motivation. *Whew, that's another employee to help manage the dungeon. Things should get easier around here now.*

*...I wish I could leave all my work to other people and just sleep. Bleh.*

We went and gave Igny back to Ittetsu later. She was a bad omen of suffering that we didn't want anywhere near us.

"You know how fuckin' worried I was when she disappeared out of nowhere?"

"Hey, don't get mad at me. The gacha did that all on its own. Direct any complaints to your Father."

He gave us a gift of 100,000 DP as thanks for returning her safely, so Rokuko got her year of sweets back. *Lucky you, Rokuko.*

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"Anyway, Elulu's joining the team. Give her a warm welcome."

"Elulu?! You're okay, well not okay, but technically not dead?!" squealed Ichika as soon as she saw her.

"Uh-huh, it's meee. I heard everything from my new Master. Can't wait to run the dungeon with all of you!"

"R-Right on... but what's with the collar? Won't it, like, freak out 'cause of Suzuki?"

"Oh, this is, like, a fashion thing! It doesn't actually do anything anymore. Because I'm dead!" *Ghosts truly are something else. Slave collars lose all meaning once you're dead. And maybe since she's gotten her revenge already, Elulu's surprisingly optimistic about all this. A bright-spirited elf Ghost. What a weird person she turned out to be.*

"I'm wearing the same clothes I had when I died, too. Oh, and if I don't focus my intestines just kinda slip out..."

"Gaaah! Gaaah! Dude, no need for a demonstration! I don't wanna see your guts! That's a little more than lewd!" *Yeah, I think "slip" is too cute of a word for that. More like gush out in a flood of blood and bile.*

"Teehee! By the way, I can do this too." Elulu thrust a hand into Ichika's chest. Her transparent arm went right through her. "I can't impact living things too much, but it looks like I can move their organs around a little."

"Holy crackers, that's friggin' disgusting! It feels so bad! You're making me wanna die too!"

"Aw, disgusting? That's kind of mean of you to say, Ichika."

"Ah, n-not there, that feels weird! Hyaahaaha!" *Yeah, I got pretty grossed out when she did the same thing to me a second ago.*

"Glad you're having fun."

"Oh, forgive me, Master. I just couldn't help myself."

"Ngggh, Elulu... I won't forget this..." Ichika glared at Elulu angrily after she pulled her arm out of her. Was kinda weird to see a Ghost looking happier than a living being.

"So yeah, Elulu's gonna be helping us with the dungeon. Ichika, you're back to a training position. Your pay will be curry rolls."

"Roger!"

"Wait, what are curry rolls...? Ah! Now that you mention it, what am I supposed to eat now that I'm a ghost?!" *Uhhh...*

*Nothing, probably? She probably just lives by sucking mana out of the earth or draining the living of their power or something. Haku had Dolce the Wraith as a subordinate, so a Ghost working alongside humans shouldn't be a problem.*

Anyway, I left training Elulu to Ichika. Give her some time and... everything should work out. Really, I'm just glad we summoned Elulu as a Ghost and nobody else. It would've been bad in more ways than one if the duo of rookie hunters or someone killed in the dungeon popped up.

*...From that perspective, Rokuko rolling Elulu is yet more proof of her luck being amazing, I guess? Who knows. Come to think of it, though, summoning a single helper here is kind of like throwing a bucket of water at a forest fire. More and more adventurers are gonna be coming to town, and we could run out of manpower again in a snap. We're just barely holding on now...* I thought while looking at my map, when suddenly I noticed something strange.

"...Aren't there too many Silkies here?"

"What?" Rokuko checked on her own map, and there we confirmed that there were five Silkies. I hadn't gotten it wrong. I took a closer look at saw that there were two Hannas and two Nicoles... oh, and now three Pios. *What's going on here? A bug? No, the monitor is showing all of them where the map says they are. Are the Silkies actually ninjas?*

I summoned Kinue and the Silkies to get to the bottom of this after work calmed down.

"Anyway, it looks like the Silkies have been duplicating. Can they do that?"

"They can duplicate," answered Kinue seamlessly. *What?! I mean, I saw them duplicate, but still.*

"Uuuh. You three can duplicate?"

"Yes, we can duplicate," all three of them answered at once. *They can duplicate...?*

"So every Silky can just up and duplicate themselves,

huh?”

“Not quite. I believe that is one of their special traits. You summoned them as a set, correct?” asked Kinue. And indeed, I had bought the Silkies as a Silky Set. The price was 80,000 DP... *Wait. Wasn't Kinue only 10,000 DP?* I looked at the catalog again, and a closer look revealed that the Silky entry had several new levels.

“Oh yeah, wasn't the Silkies Set 30,000 DP back in the day?”

“Mhm, I remember us talking about how it was a better deal over buying just one.”

The first level was a Silky for 10,000 DP, the same amount we had summoned Kinue for. And beneath it was... 40,000 DP for a Silky. *Wait, what?* And the Silky Set after it was 80,000 DP.

“Oh. Look, Keima, they come with skills. It says right there, ‘You can make its stats identical to an existing Silky,’” said Rokuko, and I saw that message written in tiny, hard to see letters at the bottom of the monitor. *Shouldn't this kind of important warning be written in red or something? The menu sure can be a dick sometimes.*

“...So basically, if we select this one, we'll get a Silky with the same stats as Kinue?”

“My my, a Silky just like me?” That meant having two Silkies as competent as Kinue. *Man, Silkies are amazing... Getting a maid as skilled as her for 40,000 DP seems kinda overpowered. Maybe it's not a big deal since she's not much of a fighter.*

“Mmm, we totally missed this.” We missed something about the Silky Set too. Honestly, the Silky Set was even more unforgiving. Three Silkies were shown as an example image. But there wasn't a single line about them being able to duplicate or anything like that. All the set said was that it was a good deal.

It was like the maker of the catalog just figured that showing that there were multiple Silkies would be enough

without any concern for the user experience... Though well, I had no idea if anyone had “made” the catalog at all. Maybe Father did. Considering his personality, it was possible he had made it confusing on purpose.

“...By the way, does duplicating have any negative effects on your body?”

“No,” answered Hanna. *Alright then. I was worried it would shave off some of their lifespan... Oh, wait, they’re fairies. I guess they’re important as long as their home remains? That’s kinda incredible.*

Unfortunately, it seemed that all duplicates shared the same life, and if one Hanna died all the Hannas would die. Nicole and Pio had their own lives, but in the end, the group was limited to just three lives total. *I can guess that’s to stop anyone from using Silkies as living shields.*

“What about your memory?”

“They all combine when we fuse back together,” answered Nicole. It was less that some bodies were clones and more that each body was the real thing. But they would fuse back together before eating, so they only needed one meal each. *Yeah, that’s definitely a good deal.*

The splitting happened when they needed to be in two places at once. They would just go, like “I’ll go here” and “I’ll go there” without even thinking too hard about it. *Man, I’m kinda jealous.*

“That kinda feels like you’re being overworked, though. Are you sure you’re alright?”

“Why wouldn’t we be? We love to work,” answered Pio. Such was the strength of she whose life revolved around work. And now that she mentioned it, all the Silkies — Kinue included — looked absolutely vibrant and full of life, even more so than usual. *Uh, I mean, you still need to get some rest. This is a Beddhist family.*

“...You know,” observed Rokuko, “The inn could operate twenty-four hours a day with the Silkies trading shifts.” *Whoa there, Rokuko. That sounds like workplace abuse.*

“Could you try splitting... duplicating for me?”

“Absolutely!” the Silkies answered together before running around in circles. I followed them with my eyes as they circled, and before I knew it there were four, six of them. *Whoa, they’re duplicating. They’re really duplicating. Wait, nine, eighteen?! They’re still going?!*

“H-Hold on, can you duplicate infinitely?”

“Yes, as many times as you need, Master!” they all replied in together, forming a booming cacophony of little girl squeals. *Which means there’s no limit to the work they can do if there’s stuff that needs doing.*

“...So basically, this whole time I’ve thought we barely had enough people, but I could have solved everything by duplicating the Silkies?”

“That’s correct,” answered Kinue. On the other hand, this did mean that they had been helping me from the shadows without me realizing it even when the workload had become too much for them to handle without duplicating.

“I’ve gotta think up some reward for this.”

“Oh my... In that case, Master, may I suggest that you use one of the many Silkies as your dakimakura? Niku has been so busy lately that you have been left without one, no?” suggested Kinue. It was true that I had been sleeping dakimakura-less for a bit.

“Well... I guess taking one would be pretty nice. But wait, would that really be a rew—” It was too late. The second I said “pretty nice,” my fate was sealed. All the Silkies looked at me like predatory maids with their eyes locked on new work to take on.

“Take me!” yelled three, and “No, take me!” screamed another three while three more wailed “Hold ooon! Take meeee!” A brawl broke out among the crowd of Silkies. *Are they seriously fighting over which of them I should take? Hey! Stop fighting among yourselves! At least fight with other people... wait, no! Don’t fight at all! Stooooop!*

“Cease, everyone! Master is losing his patience.”

“Understood! Ma’am yes ma’am!” Kinue’s warning made all of them salute. *Oh, and they’re fusing back together.*

“Listen up, everyone. Master said that ‘taking one would be pretty nice,’ if you recall.”

Replies came: “Yes.” “He certainly did.” “I heard the same.” *I did say that, but what of it?*

“In other words, I am also an option for him. My developed body may not be to his tastes, but I will strive to be the best dakimakura that I can be.”

“Heeey! No fair, Kinue!” screamed the Silkies. *“Developed body not to his tastes”? Does Kinue think I’m a lolicon too? I’m not! I promise...! The problem here is just that Kinue’s so busy already with work only she can do, I couldn’t ask her to take up even more work on top of that.*

“Rokuko.”

“Right.”

Things were getting so out of control I decided to leave it all to Rokuko. She understood my signal and gave a firm nod. *She’s so reliable nowadays.*

“Hanna, Nicole, Pio. First of all, make sure that four of you are never seen together at once. If you slip up and someone does see you, just explain that you asked a relative to come help, but the ideal is never being seen at all. Understood?”

“Understood!”

*No, that’s not what I meant. But well... I guess that did calm them down and change the subject? Ahhh, wait, the reward...* In the end everyone dispersed with the idea of me rewarding them being forgotten.

*Still, Silkies had so much hidden power it was actually amazing. I would need to think up some other reward for Kinue and the Silkies later...*

## **# A Village Adventurer in Goren (Former Cucumber Farmer)’s Perspective**

More people were coming to town lately. Apparently, a bunch of relatively famous adventurers were coming to fight the dragon that had settled in Tsia Mountain recently. Together they formed multiple parties and were challenging the [Flame Caverns] within Tsia Mountain.

Still, I never thought I'd see the day where crazy strong parties like the Thunder Gods of Super Mega Thunder, the Eternal Beauties, and the Stars of Profound Darkness would come to a tiny town like mine. I mean, this was a town for the beginner dungeon the [Cave of Greed], y'know?

Incidentally, the Stars of Profound Darkness were kicked out of the inn and forced to camp outside. They had been reported to the guild and forbidden from entering the inn. They were strong but well-known for being nasty, but still, it was cool how the inn would just casually kick them out without letting that behavior fly.

On top of all that, a lot of adventurers were coming to make a name for themselves. The best example of those were the losers who tried selling a store-bought mandragora root in the guild branch office here. I didn't know their party name, but now everyone knew of them as the Ripoff Radishes. They had managed to make a name for themselves, but not exactly in a good way.

Maybe some people thought that they could get popular just by standing out. But to me, all the people talking about slaying the Flame Dragon just didn't get it. I had seen the dragon for myself and it was on another level. To put it in concrete terms, I couldn't imagine anyone fighting it and not getting beaten in a single blow.

An expert on dragons that the town chief knew said that the Flame Dragon would stay in the [Flame Caverns] for five years, but who knew what would happen if adventurers kept prodding it. The expert had said a few attacks wouldn't bother it too much, at least. From the Flame Dragon's perspective, we adventurers were like children trying to slap its leg. Or maybe even like Jellies, unable to even do that.

We were nothing to it.

As proof of that, a party of three adventurers came back from a failed attempt at dragon hunting. Luckily, none of them had been killed. The dragon had apparently been playing around with them from start to finish.

“Forgive me, Princess Chirolī... my shield could not protect us.”

“No, it is the fault of my full-power {Ice Bolt} being unable to pierce the Flame Dragon’s hide.”

So said the elf princess of the Eternal Beauties and her knight companions. It was staggering to think that an elf’s magic, and of an element purported to be most effective against fire, did no damage at all. Though it wasn’t that crazy when you considered how much more mana dragons had than humans.

Thunder Gods of Super Mega Thunder returned with their hair standing up and their skin black with ash, as if they had all been hit with fire. The Stars of Profound Darkness had, impressively enough, been burned with fire at just the right temperature that all their equipment had burned off, leaving them naked. Things would have been a nightmare for them if the Eternal Beauties hadn’t offered them waistcloths.

Those three parties served as a warning that different people interpreted in different ways. Some concluded it was foolish to try fighting a dragon at all. Some said they should gather more people and fight the dragon together. Some thought the three just weren’t as strong as them.

If you asked me, those who ran away were the smartest out of anyone. We were talking about a dragon, after all. Just looking at one was gambling with your life. When they came asking for my help, I turned them down. Every villager would turn them down. The town chief had said the Flame Dragon was sleeping in Tsia Mountain and that none of us should lay our hands on it.

The town chief was both the top adventurer in town and the pope of Beddhism. Who wouldn’t listen to him? Anyone

who ignored his orders was no villager of Goren. It was wrong to disturb someone's sleep, even if that someone was a dragon. Beddhism did not discriminate.

Sure, my field got burned. But maybe that was for the best, since the town chief gave me sugar beet seeds and now I was a sugar farmer.

"To think we'd end up as sugar farmers, huh?"

"It's still kinda hard to believe..."

"Sugar beets look kinda like radishes, but you can't really put kneesocks on them..." The former radish farmer was still as messed up in the head as ever.

"...Why don't you just grow some radishes on the side?"

"I didn't even think of that! Are you a genius?" *Well, I mean, farming is basically a side thing for us anyway. We are adventurers, after all.*

"Oh, but lately so many people have been going into the dungeon that it's harder to find chests. I haven't found any kneesocks at all thanks to that."

Now that he mentioned it, the dungeon definitely did have a lot more people going through it now. There were those who gave up after seeing other people lose to the dragon, and there were those warming up by going through the beginner dungeon that was the [Cave of Greed]. The outsiders were really dominating the place. At least that meant there were free goblin corpses to use as fertilizer lying around.

"I hear some people are sleeping inside the dungeon's Safe Zone."

"...Yeah, the inn is pretty packed right now."

"The Inn of Greed is packed too. There are actually lines to get a room there now."

"Camping outside and sleeping in Safe Zones, huh...?"

There were even people sleeping in the greed trap safe zone, with the sword in the pedestal. But apparently a few people had died in the corridors due to people pulling out the Magic Blade and activating the spike trap. Dying due to

a trap another adventurer activated must have sucked real bad.

“Y’know, aren’t more people dying to the dungeons than the dragon?”

“Yeah, for sure. You’re right about that.” Everyone who faced the dragon and lived to tell the tale had said that the dragon didn’t take the fight seriously. According to the town chief, it was probably thinking of them as toys to play with to kill time.

Most people didn’t go any further into the [Cave of Greed] than the Inn of Greed due to the danger shooting up, but people who didn’t know that and people who did but wanted Magic Blades anyway were going deeper, which meant a lot of casualties.

“I hear people are kill-stealing Iron Golems too. Y’know, nabbing the kill right before the hunter gets the final blow.”

“Yeah, people just passing by don’t care about their reputation here.” Bar fights were nothing too serious. But not being able to hunt Iron Golems was a real problem. There were even people who would target those carrying the hunted Iron Golem back out of the dungeon. Though most of the time they were stopped by other adventurers who caught them in the act.

“I’m not one to talk, but man, a lot of adventurers sure are stupid.”

“Yeah. Can you believe people who can’t even read are trying to steal books from the church? They don’t even get that the true value of books is what’s inside them.” There were also people who tried breaking slot machines after losing all their money to them. They ended up getting the crap beaten out of them by everyone there, though.

Finally, we arrived at the Dancing Doll Inn’s cafeteria, with our large bags stuffed full of sugar beets.

“I’ve got some of Goren’s famous Dragon Beets hereee!”

“And I’ve got Golem Beets!”

We had become sugar farmers, but we didn’t just sell the

sugar straight up. We'd need authorization from the Merchant's Guild to sell luxury goods, and we wanted to avoid that. So we just sold the cooked beets at stands in the cafeteria instead, and boy did they sell.

Incidentally, we didn't put dragon meat into Dragon Beets or golem chunks into Golem Beets. Inspired by doll-shaped food described in a book within the Beddhist Church, we had the town's sole blacksmith Kantara forge molds for us to cook in. Some in the shape of dragons, some in the shape of golems.

Also, the iron used to make the molds was from Goren Town's own Iron Golems. The beets were truly a Goren product through and through. We had the town chief's permission to describe them as "Goren's Famous Beets."

And yeah, the Dragon Beets and Golem Beets sold pretty well, even though they were the same beets that just looked different. We thought about cooking them after getting the order, but there were so many orders we wouldn't be able to cook them fast enough if we didn't make them ahead of time.

Such was the strength of sugar and sweets. There were even some people who bought them while chanting about how they would give themselves extra luck for beating the dragon by eating the dragon-shaped beets ahead of time. Indeed, Goren's famous church-approved Dragon Beets.

The recipe itself was pretty simple: pouring batter made by the town's best chef Kinue into molds and cooking the beets inside of them. One plus for our beets was that the batter Kinue made probably had honey and such mixed in to add more sweetness and depth. Also, the bread rose excellently by just adding some flour and sugar to water. I didn't know why, but as long as they kept selling, I was happy.

We once tried to give half of our earnings to the town chief as tax, but he said he didn't need it since we were selling the beets and the dough for him. I wasn't really sure

what he meant by that, but in either case we just added the money to our church donations.

“Thank you, thank you! See you next time... aaand, my Dragon Beets sold like crazy again.”

“Crazy when each one is ten coppers, huh?” The Golem Beets were five coppers each. But most adventurers were all about the Dragon Beets, maybe since it really was that appealing to just eat a dragon, even if the dough was the same. Either way, selling beets was better than risking our lives in the dungeon while it was so busy.

The other villagers were pretty upset about not being able to hunt Iron Golems, but Wozma and the town chief moved fast to fix things. With Dyne’s help we had our own stands, and people were selling all sorts of things — sauce they had from the dungeon, cooked eggplants blessed by the nuns, and so on.

Also, the Adventurer’s Guild was supplying Keep the Peace quests that involved patrolling the town. Villagers like us were given priority for that quest. The main problem was that it was hard to spend the money earned while the bar was so busy. The entertainment room was closed, too. No biggie, though. We could just spend our savings when it opened up again.

I let my mind drift, then heard some nearby adventurers chatting while eating their Dragon Beets.

“Man, the dungeon here’s crazy as shit.”

“That spiral staircase is out to kill. You know how many people I’ve seen die in front of me there?”

“What’s real crazy is what’s at the bottom of that staircase. There are Magic Blades down there, but man... It’s not worth it.”

“If only we could get Magic Blades from those trapped rooms...”

You could hear a lot of rumors when running a stand. Having a stand’s actually a good way to gather information. You had to have something to sell, though. Or you could just

ask someone else who had a stand. It is pretty common to buy information from store owners and such. Finally, I got to see what it's like to be on the other side of the equation.

"Oh, selling even more of those, huh? I'm impressed."

"Oh! Sir! It's all thanks to you!" I bowed my head at the speaker. It was the noble-looking guy who had lent us the warming magic tool.

I didn't know his name, and I hadn't even asked if he was an actual noble. That was because he preferred to remain anonymous, and we were fine with that since Wozma, the vice town chief, had said he was trustworthy.

"Please, have a few. You could give them to your wife or children as a gift... Aah, no need for payment! We already owe you more than we could ever repay!" I stopped him when he tried taking out his wallet.

"Oh, are you certain? Should you really be giving your products away for free?"

"It's fine, you might as well be our investor. We owe you a lot for letting us use your magic tool, and this is really the only way we can repay you," I explained while putting Dragon Beets on a plate and holding it out to him.

"Investor, hm? Where did you learn that terminology and manner of thinking from?"

"Uuuh, from a book in the church. Not really something that helps much with adventuring."

"I see. You've been studying well," he replied while wrapping the Dragon Beets in a white handkerchief and sticking them into his {Storage}. He must have been a real noble if he carried around handkerchiefs like that and knew {Storage}. He seemed close with Maiodore, so maybe he was the archduke? Haha, just kidding. Maiodore was one thing since she was just a kid, but the archduke himself wouldn't go around enjoying food from random stands, surely.

"By the way, weren't there three of you before? I see only two of you here now."

“Ah, that guy’s watching over the magic tool right now.” There had been a lot of untrustworthy people around town lately. We couldn’t leave the magic tool on its own without someone to guard it.

“Hmm... I would hope Tsia has something prepared to fix this situation.”

“I’m sure the town chief has something up his sleeve,” I said casually, which made the noble widen his eyes in surprise.

“...You think that Keima has a plan?”

“Maybe? He’s Keima, so...”

“He certainly is trusted by his people, I see,” laughed the noble. He then thanked me for my wisdom and left with a smile.

...Alright, back to selling Dragon Beets! And whatever Golem Beets I can.

## Side Chapter: A Thief Named Tieff

In Goren's bar, there was a villager talking to an adventurer friend of his.

"Y'know, there was a wedding here right before the dragon came."

"Yeah? A wedding, here?"

"Yup. It all happened at the nearby church. Man, it was something else."

"C'mon, it's just a small-town wedding. Couldn't have been that great."

"The bride had two dresses."

"...You mean some simple ol' plain dresses, yeah?"

"Nah, fancy ones like nobles would wear... Actually, ones so fancy not even most nobles would wear them. Pretty sure they had actual gems sewn into them."

"Seriously...? What kinda villager can afford those?"

"Apparently, the Beddhist Church lent them the dresses. Sheesh, I dunno what our pope's thinking, spending that much on some village girl," said the villager, and Tieff heard it all.

"...There's treasure like that in the church, huh?" Tieff immediately went to scope it out. It looked clean on the outside, hinting that it was newly built. The walls were white like the buildings in Pavella, giving it a sense of purity and cleanliness.

Once inside he found a bunch of believers reading books and sleeping on the desks. The air was comfortably warm and the chapel had stained glass windows, a massive holy symbol, and a magical tool spinning on the ceiling to keep a

steady flow of air.

“...Wait, books? But these look like commoners. Don’t tell me nobles sneak in here.”

“What, first time in the church? We’re all commoners here, y’know. Villagers.” A passerby replied to Tieff’s murmur.

“...Why are commoners reading books like it’s no big deal?”

“This church lets believers read its books. They used to be in some shelves near the back, but thanks to all the thieves lately they were moved to a back room.”

“Those empty shelves were bookshelves...? Hold on a second. That makes it sound like books were just left out and people could grab them whenever they wanted.”

“Yeah, anyone in the church could read them. Only villagers got to take them outside, though.”

Unbelievable. Something as expensive as books were just laid out for anyone to grab. That aside, Tieff was more interested in the dresses he had heard about.

“I heard something about some crazy dresses at a wedding here. Know anything about those?”

“Oh yeah, for sure. Those were some awesome-looking dresses. But Waife didn’t let them own her. Like, it felt like the dresses had been made just for her and her alone, yeah? Everyone made fun of Hubb ’cause we were jealous of how lucky he was.” It seemed the man was another villager.

“You know where those dresses are? I wanna take a look at them.”

“Uhhh, the town chief probably has them.”

“Why the town chief?” asked the thief.

“’Cause the pope of Beddhism’s also the town chief.”

“...Alright. This is a church town, then.”

“The church is kind of a side thing, really. The town came first.”

“Seriously? Did a god give someone divine inspiration or something?”

"A god, huh...? Don't think Beddhism has any gods. I guess it all happened 'cause the town chief found a bible in the dungeon." *A church without a god? That doesn't even make sense*, thought the thief.

"Thanks, man. You've been a big help."

"No problem! Oyasuminasai, my brother." The passerby sat down and slammed his head against the desk. Must be nice to have a life where you could just take naps in church whenever you wanted.

Tieff went looking for the town chief's house next. He found it in no time. It was right next to the inn, or rather, it was connected to the inn. The security seemed a bit light, but well, that was what you'd expect in a small town like Goren. The residence was pretty fancy considering how recently the town had been built.

"...Should I?" He was referring to, of course, stealing. Everything he heard pointed to the town chief being rich. The inn had a grand suite that cost tens of golds to stay in, and people had been staying in that suite recently.

Not to mention he was so unconcerned about thieves that he would just carelessly leave expensive books lying around. He was probably some stuck-up son of a farming noble. In which case, a little bit of stealing would be no problem at all. He was basically asking for thieves to target him.

And so, Tieff decided to do the deed. Unfortunately for him.

But in any case, he waited until nighttime — so late at night that even the bar was closed. Tieff waited until there were no passersby anywhere nearby, then pressed against the front door of the chief residence.

He checked the doorknob. It was locked, at the very least. But not with a lock that would pose any trouble for Tieff to pick. He used a drill and a special needle. First, he drilled a hole into the door, then pushed the needle into that hole. A flick of his wrist and the lock was undone.

Such was Tieff's {Open Lock} skill. It allowed him to manipulate special needles.

"...■■■■, ■■■■■■■■■■■■ — {Life Search.}" He opened the door slightly, stuck a finger through the crack, and checked for people with detection magic. The problem with the spell was that it couldn't detect people inside closed rooms and such, which meant he would have to use it each time he opened another door.

*...Alright.* At the very least, nobody was standing guard by the front door. Tieff silently slid inside the residence.

It was pitch black inside since no starlight could shine within the building. But Tieff could still see everything as foggy black and white shapes — no colors, just the shapes. That was his {Night Vision} skill at work. Incidentally, he was using a {Soundproof} skill to hide the sounds he made. Anything not extremely loud would come out quieter than a grain of sand falling to the ground.

*This place has a lot of rooms.* There were halls with lots of rooms on either side. So many that it removed all doubt that this was a rich noble's son frivolously wasting money. But it was plainly decorated, with only a single metal flower pot on the shelf by the front door. The valuables were either in a safe or in the chief's room.

*Now, let's find the money... I guess the dresses would be in a closet?* The doors all looked the same, but kindly enough there were plates on them that identified what they were.

*Niku, huh? This must be a slave's room. And Ichika, next to her... another slave?* Neither of those were the town chief's name, at least. No point in going into either of them. Still, him having dedicated rooms for slaves meant he really was rich. The thought of how much loot awaited him put Tieff in a good mood.

*Guess I should go for rooms without plates?* He cracked open a nearby door using {Soundproof} to quiet the sounds. After confirming with magic that nobody was inside, he

slowly opened it the rest of the way.

...A bathroom. No point going any further. Next.

He checked the next room for people... and this time, it was just a normal empty room. Next.

But the next door had a plate with Keima on it. That was the town chief's name. An important room to check, but... Tieff couldn't get the door open. Not even a crack.

It must have been locked. From the inside, of course.

*If it's his personal room, he's probably asleep right now. Might be best not to go inside at all.* Tieff gave up on the town chief's room without even picking the lock.

There was a room with a plate entitled parlor right next to the town chief's room. Probably weren't any safes in there. Next.

*Administrator's Office, huh? Now this is suspicious.* Tieff tested the door and found that it was locked as well. The lock was more complicated than the front door's. That was a good sign, and not a problem for Tieff.

Taking his time and using {Soundproof}, he opened the lock — after a significant amount of time working on it — and slid inside. There he found two work desks, a bunch of books strewn all over the place, and a shelf of organized paperwork. The front-facing desk was probably the town chief's, with the sideways one next to it likely belonging to the vice chief.

Was there a safe in the room...? Yes. It was big and stood out. Only problem was, big meant heavy — real heavy. He wouldn't be able to take it outside. He would need to open the lock and just take whatever was inside.

Tieff went straight to work. He couldn't find a keyhole. It had a dial, which made it clear what kind of safe it was. But dial safes were extra expensive and mostly used in castles.

*Either he's overly cautious, or he's just that rich.* Tieff licked his dry lips and pumped himself up. It'd take some time, but he could crack a dial.

*Wonder what I should spend the money on,* thought Tieff.

He reached out for the dial. Who could have predicted that the safe would grow legs and attack him?

“Guh?!” But still, Tieff managed to dodge to the side and avoid the safe’s tackle. He hurriedly shut his mouth, but the safe dropped to the ground with a heavy thump.

“Wh-What the hell...?”

Click. Tieff’s head snapped to the door. There stood a beauty with long silver hair, holding a lantern.

“Wh-Who’s there?! This is the town chief’s residence!”

*O-Oh shit, I gotta get outta here.* Tieff decided to flee. He had two routes available to him. The door and the window. On top of that, he had three choices. Take the girl as a hostage, kill her, or run like hell.

*Tch. This is gonna suck.* Tieff chose the simplest decision with the least amount of risk. In other words, kill the woman to keep her silent. He drew a knife and threw it at her. But it went right through her body.

*Huh?! What just happened... Wait!*

“KYAAAH, a robber! HE’S GONNA KILL MEEEE!” The girl ran off screaming.

*Fuck, not a screamer! I gotta get outta here!* thought Tieff while dashing to the window. But it wouldn’t open. *Is it locked?! Or am I just grabbing it from the wrong way? I dunno if I should...* His thoughts were interrupted by the safe coming up behind him.

*Fuck! Just gotta do it!* He tackled the window and broke through it. That made a lot of noise, but it was better than getting caught. If he could just get outside and dash to the forest, he would be free. Unfortunately, ground was not waiting for him outside the window.

“What?” Rather, there was a well. It caught him so off guard he didn’t even know what to say. Why was there a well there? Who knows, but he fell in it like it was sucking him inside.

“Ngh!” He stuck out his hands and grabbed the rim of the well right before he fell all the way inside.

“That was cl—”

“Be a dear and fall for me, would you?” A passerby... no, someone clearly after Tieff peeled his fingers back. All he saw before falling was a flash of green hair and a maid outfit.

□ □ □

Tieff couldn't move once he hit the bottom of the well. Or to be more accurate, the bottom of the well opened into a pitfall, which had people waiting to bind him in ropes.

“Another ooone? Ahaha, I still have the last one, but... Fwaah, so sleepy... it's too late for this, maybeee... Haaah,” said a girl with plain brown hair while yawning. “You knooow, stealing stuff this late at niiight is a biiig sin. We're Beddhists here, soooo... Fwaah. You woke me uppp...” None of it made sense. Why was there someone living in the bottom of the well anyway?

“Oooh, by the waaay, this isn't a well. It's a secret laaab. The old entrance got blocked off ooonce, so now there's a trap slash secret entrance leading heeere...” The sleepy-looking girl dragged out her words as if they were as tired as her.

“I-I just fell by accident, alright? Who stole anything? I need some help here.”

“Aaah, you're going to try to lieee, hmm? Too baaad, that won't work heeere,” the girl said, taking out the knife that Tieff had just thrown at the other girl. “But we'll let you gooo, if you help with my experimeeeents.”

“E-Experiments? Alright, sure, I'm game. Just get me ou—”

“You wiiiill?! That's juuust what I wanted to hear!” The girl rejoiced in her relaxed tone of voice. “You knooow, I've always wanted to research human bodiies. Like, how much can you cut off before they can't use skills anymore, riiight?” *Cut off?! Tieff, terrified, just wanted to the hell out of there as soon as possible.*

“Buuut like I saaaaid, the last one’s still aliiive... and I’m sleeeepy, so let’s do this tomorrow, okaaay? Hmmmm, maybe I should try burying magic stones inside of them? Fwaaah. Anywaaay, oyasuminasaaai.”

“H-Hey! Help me, c’mon!” The girl said what she wanted to say, then left on the spot. *What the hell was that all about...? Well, whatever. I’ll wait for my chance, then get the hell out of here. No point rushing things and slipping up.*

Tieff, unable to move due to all the ropes, just went to sleep. And nobody ever saw him again. The few people he knew that did notice his absence didn’t really care, figuring he got caught doing some crime and either ran away or got killed.

“Weeeell, I said I’d forgive you, but I never said I wouldn’t kill yooou.” Suffice to say, his associates were right about one of those.

## **# Keima’s Perspective**

“Oh right, Keima, the front door was unlocked when I woke up. There’s been a lot of crime lately. You need to lock it before you go to sleep.”

“Whoa, Rokuko, you sure about that? The front door’s a golem and it locks by itself at night.”

“Wait, really?” Yes, really. Incidentally, as a security measure the doors to our rooms were set not to open from the outside when a thief entered the building. It was the kind of fancy security we could only have thanks to our entire home being made of golems. Couldn’t ask for better security, really. Probably.

“Oooh. Now that you mention it, that’s totally right. I guess that means another thief broke in last night.”

“Yep. As for the damage... looks like we’ve got a report from Rei. Says here that he broke a window in my office. Sheesh, more repairs... I’m really not in the mood for this,” I said, bringing up the monitor. Our entire home was a golem.

Thus, our entire home was basically covered in security cameras. *And just to be clear, I try not to look inside bathrooms or people's rooms, alright?*

"...Interesting. Looks like he drilled a hole in the door, then stuck a needle inside. He's pretty good." *Guess I'll have to fill that hole in too. Whaaat a pain.* "Sheesh, things really have been getting bad lately. Can't say I'm too surprised though, more people going through town means more people ready to commit crimes." And most of them went straight to the chief's residence to get rich quick. Especially since the security looked pretty lax here.

"We sure save a lot of time by painting a target on ourselves and concentrating all the crime in one place."

"Each criminal down makes everything more peaceful, and we get dungeon points. It's two birds with one stone!"

Not to mention, I said that the security *looked* lax, not that it *was* lax. The chief residence was basically a trap house that invited thieves in, then ate them up. Since all of our actual valuables were stored in the Master Room, more or less, there wasn't anything for people to steal. I even turned our safe into a golem just to have it grow legs.

"It's like the experimental Iron Golems we have down in the dungeon," noted Rokuko.

"A good ol' Living Bank. The actual safe we did buy with DP, so it's legit. All the {Create Golem} stuff happened afterward." I had given it an order to attack anyone who tried to stealthily open it at night. It was filled with our gold coins and could dish out some heavy tackles thanks to that, but at the price of being slow enough that you could dodge it even when caught unprepared. So far it had only managed to hit a single person.

"I gotta thank Rei and the others for working so late at night."

"Rei said she's just glad she finally gets to live like a Vampire should." *Oh yeah, Vampires are nocturnal. And Rei is a Vampire. Right.*

"Maybe we should make Elulu do some stuff too?" suggested Rokuko.

"...I don't know about turning the chief residence into a ghost house."

"That's fair. By the way, what should we do with the thief this time? Let Neruneh experiment on him again?"

"Seems like Neruneh has all the bodies she needs. Maybe Elulu will want him for something." She had said that she wanted to experiment with how much she could interact with humans, whether she could curse and possess them, and so on. I was completely behind her doing those experiments in her spare time. *Though I do kinda want to execute him now to save the hassle of him potentially escaping and leaking secrets.*

"Anyway, I'm off to bed."

"Come on, you just woke up. At least fix the house before going to bed."

"Yeah, yeah." If you asked me, it would be smarter to just leave the front door unlocked so thieves didn't have to break in every time. *But whatever. Just gotta fix this and sleep.*

## Chapter 3 — # Igni's Perspective

Think of the boss room in the fifth floor of the [Flame Caverns]. Normally there would be a Red Minotaur camping out there, but now there was a Flame Dragon rolling around on her back.

"Okay, I'm bored." It had been yet another day of her crushing adventurers without any effort. She was letting them leave alive due to her promise to Keima, but she had really gotten bored of playing around with small fries.

Incidentally, she was stripping the adventurers of their equipment which she could give to Ittetsu. Turned out their equipment was good for putting into treasure chests. She didn't know why humans wanted fragile armor and helmets that she could easily break between her toes, but Ittetsu gave her sweet Golem Beets as thanks for them, so, well... she didn't mind it.

Incidentally, Golem Beets didn't actually have golems in them. But they were sweet and tasty. Small, too, so she usually ate them in human form. There were Dragon Beets too, but that felt kind of like cannibalism. Sure, they looked cool and were super tasty, but they would go bad if she just kept one around to look at.

"Heeey, Dad. Can I go play with Uncle Keima?"

"Didja already forget you're grounded?" Oh, right. That meant she would have to sneak out. Not like she would just stay inside when she had a new Ghost friend she wanted to meet.

Igni stealthily morphed into human form, put on a gold arm band, and ran through the dungeon. The armband

apparently hid her strong dragon aura. Keima was used to Ittetsu and Redra, but her Ghost friend Elulu would pass out if she weren't wearing it.

Eventually, she reached the magma-flowing passage that connected the [Flame Caverns] to the [Cave of Greed]. Luckily, nobody seemed to have noticed her.

"Oh, Igni. Welcome."

"Hi hiii! I'm here to play!" Excluding her friend Elulu, that is. As the [Cave of Greed]'s manager, Elulu noticed the second Igni came and went to pop her head out of the dungeon wall.

Within the magma-filled area apparently called [Phenny's Playground], she and Elulu played the block tower game. It was fun. Especially now that she was good enough to win one out of every five games.

"You know, I think that means I'm a master of my human form now!"

"Um. Well, mmm, you might be able to pass yourself off as a Dragonewt, but... you're so strong that people could die if you aren't careful, Igni."

"It'll be fine! I don't even burn the blocks anymore, right?"

"You are a lot better about that than you used to be."

"Better means perfect! Yaaay!" Igni squealed happily, which made Elulu break into a smile. Children were always so heartwarming, even when they happened to be three hundred years older than you.

"I think I'm ready for the next level!"

"The next level?"

"Yeah! It's time for me to learn more about humans!" Igni clenched her fist and flared up. That turned the blocks she had been holding to ash, but Elulu decided not to worry about that.

"Elulu! I wanna see the human town!"

"U-Umm. Why not just look at it through the monitor? Here, I'll open the menu and... turn off the 'invisible'

option..." As a dungeon administrator, Elulu had been given access to most of the menu. She could use the monitor to see the town on top of the dungeon (because the town was part of the dungeon, but anyway), and soon enough Igni could see all of the monitors Elulu was looking at too.

"Woow! There's so many humans!"

"That's right. There seems to be a festival going on."

"A festival? Like, those things where humans offer up beer and meat to you?"

"People worship you, Igni...?"

"Some people tried to give me human women! I didn't really like them, though. Minotaurs and Orcs have way more meat than humans."

Elulu deduced that Igni was referring to sacrificial rituals, not festivals, but in the end, there really wasn't that big of a difference between them. By now she had learned that being fussy over details did not serve you well while spending time with dragons.

"Also, like, spicy food's way better!"

"Oh, you like spicy food, Igni?"

"I like it 'cause spicy stuff feels strong! It goes good with beer, too." For a second Elulu wondered about Igni drinking while looking as young as she did, but then remembered that her human form was just temporary. Her actual dragon form was plenty old enough to drink. She was three-hundred years old either way, after all.

Suddenly, Igni pointed at one of the monitors. "Hey, Elulu. Aren't those Golem Beets?" Indeed, that monitor was showing the Golem Beets stand. Though so many more people were buying the Dragon Beets that they felt kind of like a side thing.

"Yes, that is the Golem Beets stand. Do you like Golem Beets...? They aren't that spicy."

"Uh huh. They aren't spicy, but I like sweet stuff too! I sure would love some spicy Golem Beets! Those would really make me want beer... Oh, but I'm grounded right now, and

Dad said no beer.” Igni didn’t mind leaving home while grounded, but she drew the line at drinking. Elulu honestly could not comprehend why that was.

“Anyway, I like Golem Beets the most!”

“I see,” said Elulu just as a fresh Golem Beet was finished. Hot steam wafted off it, making the pastry look good even through the monitor.

“I wanna go eat one!” said Igni, her eyes shining.

*Oh no*, thought Elulu. She had been given permission to play along with Igni’s visits, but who knew if that permission extended to taking her to the town.

Really, though, it wasn’t too hard to conclude that it certainly did not. After all, the town was more than filled with adventurers here specifically to kill Igni. Things would get real bad real fast if they found out who Igni really was somehow.

“I wanna eat a fresh Golem Beet! I know you can buy them!”

“Mmm. In that case, want me to bring you some? I’m sure Ichika would be willing to buy them for you.”

“Nuh-uh! I’m going myself! My human form is perfect now, after all!” And so began the tantrum of a three-hundred year old child. If you’re wondering why Igni was so obsessed with her human form, it’s because her mother told her that if she was in love with a human, she had to master her human form and the ways of human culture to be with them. Now that she had gotten a grip on it, it really was time for her to learn about human culture and such. She could have just asked Elulu, but Igni was more about doing than talking.

...It would be pitiful to reject her after just complimenting her on how much better she had gotten. Elulu, conflicted, decided to just ask her superior.

“And that’s the situation, Master. What should I do?”

“I kinda wish you hadn’t asked me.” Keima scratched his head, having been called over. He looked tired.

"Please, uncle! I wanna buy Golem Beets!" Igni looked at Keima with gleaming eyes. Her childlike innocence was so bright that Keima had to look away.

"Actually, is Ittetsu okay with all this? Aren't you supposed to be grounded?"

"D-Duh, of course he is!"

"Are you suuure about that?" Keima gave Igni a doubtful look as her eyes wavered. He had probably already figured out that Igni wasn't here with her parents' permission. But since Ittetsu wasn't making a fuss about it, he could also guess that he wanted Igni to have an avenue for blowing off steam. Besides, going outside wouldn't be that big of a deal if she kept her promise not to kill adventurers.

"You can go if you make absolutely sure that nobody finds out you're a dragon."

"Really?!"

"Lemme just warn you now, no beating up villagers or adventurers to threaten them. Here, I'll give you some cash to buy Dragon Beets with. And a robe to hide yourself." Keima handed over a small leather pouch with coins. He then pulled out a nondescript brown robe and pulled it over Igni's head.

"Okay! Thanks, uncle! Also, I like Golem Beets more!"

"That so? Well, whatever works. Just come back as soon as you finish buying them."

"Okaaay!"

"...I'm sure she won't need any supervision. I mean, she's three-hundred years old, a little shopping won't kill her."

Only adventurers could be seen going in and out of the [Cave of Greed]. Keima, figuring there might be problems if she was seen leaving through the front exit, built a small tunnel through Tsia Mountain and connected it to the [Cave of Greed]. Now Igni could leave from the side and go to Goren herself.

That said, Igni looked just a little bit too suspicious for everyone to buy she was a normal human. Good thing she

was short enough to obviously be one, then. Her limbs were just human enough that she would be fine buying things if she just kept the robe on.

Igni searched for the stand Elulu had shown her. She had noticed how many people there were through the monitor, but only once she was there did she realize how much they blocked her view.

“Oh, my bad.”

“Mm?” A kid about Igni’s height bumped into her. That wasn’t anything to worry about, so she just went back to searching, holding back the urge to fly high above the humans taller than her.

“Owowowowow! H-Hey, let go of me!”

“I’m not about to let a pickpocket go free. Kid or not, I’m gonna hand you over to the authorities.”

Igni ignored the fuss going on behind her and kept looking. Until... there! It was the Dragon Beets stand. They sold Golem Beets there too! Igni found her way there.

“Mister! One Golem Beet please!”

“Oh! You’ve got good taste, girl. Golem Beets just make sense in Goren Town. Oh, and that’ll be five coppers. Go ahead and pay, it’ll be right up.”

“Okay! Wait...” She dug through her clothes, but couldn’t find the pouch she got from Keima.

“It’s gone! My pouch!” Just before Igni could throw off her robe to look for it, someone called out to her.

“Excuse me, miss. This was stolen from you a second ago.”

“Oooh! That’s my pouch! Thank y—” Igni cut off mid-sentence, freezing in place. The man speaking to her had a familiar face. Her heart thumped.

...When she said she had fallen in love at first sight, she wasn’t kidding. She thought she would recognize him the second she saw him again, and she was right.

“Huh? Are you a kid from this village? Or did you come from somewhere else?”

“Um, somewhere else. I wanted to buy some Golem Beets. What about you? What’s your name?”

“I’m Wataru. I come to this town all the time,” said Wataru with a smile.

Igni had safely gotten her Golem Beets, and she had reunited with her first love. She was so nervous that scales reappeared on the back of her hand when paying, but the guy behind the stand just assumed she was wearing a red metal gauntlet and didn’t mention it.

Igni couldn’t stop grinning. Wataru. Wataru. She repeated the name over and over in her head, tasting every syllable.

“You in love?”

“Wha?!” The sudden question threw Igni off hard.

“Most everyone buys Dragon Beets, so I’m wondering if you just love Golem Beets.”

“O-Oh. That’s what you mean. Yep, I love Golem Beets more.” Igni stuffed her cheeks full of the Golem Beet. The fresh pastry was sweet and fluffy. She could taste all the soft flavors since she was eating with her human mouth. She liked sweeter things when she was in human form.

“So good! Fresh ones are great!”

“Ahaha, they sure are.” Wataru ate the Dragon Beet and Golem Beet he had bought himself.

“...Still surprised that there’s no red bean paste in either of these.”

“Red bean paste?”

“Oh, nothing, don’t worry about it. These are actually made to taste better on their own, anyway. Really reminds of the baby castella I used to eat at fairs... they’re more like taiyaki size-wise, though.” Wataru bit into the tail of his Dragon Beet with a nostalgic look in his eyes. Igni watched him carefully.

“Y-You like Dragon Beets too, Wataru...?”

“Huh? I mean, yeah, Dragon Beets are way more cool. They look strong and everything.”

“Really?! They look strong?! You’re so right, dragons are

super strong and cool!”

“But Golem Beets are cheaper and bigger. They’re the better deal. Maybe I like Golem Beets more after all.”

“You’re so right! Golem Beets are awesome!” Igni was so happy that he liked what she liked that she actually waved her arms in the air. But she stopped once her wings started to grow back. Just had to hide them back in her robe.

“I was right about you, Wataru. You can come to my home any time.”

“Uh? Thanks?”

“You’re welcome! Come to my place! Promise!”

“Ahaha, I’m not sure if I can promise that. But where do you live, anyway?”

“Mm, over theeeaaahwait...” Igni started to point to Tsia Mountain, but then remembered she had promised Keima not to reveal her identity. “Umm... It’s a secret! I’m a girl who keeps her promises!”

“Guess I can’t push the subject, then.” Wataru smiled. “Well, I’ll look forward to your warm welcome if I ever go to your place.”

“Uh-huh! I’ll make Dad accept you no matter what!” Igni puffed out her chest with pride, having successfully managed to make a promise with Wataru. She decided to give him her prized Magma Slime to eat if he ever came to the [Flame Caverns]. Then they could play with the blocks. And have fun fighting. She would welcome him with all she had.

At which point she remembered she’d promised Keima she would go back as soon as she bought her Golem Beets. She hated to leave the love of her life so soon, but Igni was a girl who kept her promises.

“Okay, I’ve gotta go home! See you later, Wataru!”

“Sure, see ya later.”

Igni energetically waved goodbye to Wataru before heading home. Incidentally, Ittetsu was waiting for her there and gave her a harsh lecture on not only leaving the

dungeon, but going all the way to town.

## **# Keima's Perspective**

I thought all the dragon stuff would barely last long at all, but it sure was still going on. There was no end to adventurers wanting to defeat a dragon to get famous.

...So, I did some research into why, and learned that it was all my fault. I should never have said that Igni would be staying in the mountain for five years. That made everyone consider the next five years their chance to get the Flame Dragon. Many adventurers were hearing tales of the situation and deciding it was their time to shine.

But that was fine. A problem, but not the big one. The big problem, and my big mistake, was making Igni promise to let the adventurers leave alive. I did say "if possible," but they were all small fries to Igni. As long as she didn't slip and crush them by accident, it was cake for her to send them running while still alive.

The result? Everyone noticed how many people were coming back alive, and realized that they could safely challenge the dragon. Although one could also say that I didn't want to set my friend Ittetsu's daughter on a path of non-stop murder for half a decade, so maybe this was still for the best.

Anyway, people coming back alive meant more information about the Flame Dragon getting passed on. That meant each new challenger could make a more informed plan. Party after party of adventurers with perfectly constructed plots were strutting into Goren each day.

But not even their plots could overcome the enormous power difference between them and a dragon. Fire-resistance armor could be blown off with a single sneeze from Igni. They would need armor made from Phoenix eggshells if they wanted to resist Igni's fire. And those would shatter if she poked them!

To sum it all up, there was an infinite loop of adventurers coming to town, fighting Igni, resurrecting thanks to me, spreading more info about Igni, and inspiring more people to come to town. If things kept going as they were, it was possible that someone might eventually beat Igni. Though to be fair, they weren't the best at keeping information accurate. Which is to say that the losers mainly hyped up the story to brag about how intense their fight had been with all their special plans and equipment. The people listening understood that the tales were exaggerated, so they fiddled with the details themselves. Sometimes they ended up retelling just half the story, assuming the other half to be false.

People would hear the modified story, think they needed to prepare twice as hard to win, which ultimately put them at the same level as the people whose story they heard except with a pinch of overconfidence that led them right to their failure. Even people who made actually crazy plans ended up spoiling them by bragging loudly about them in the church and camps. Oh, and I was the one spilling the beans to Ittetsu. Though he always told me that none of it would work on Igni.

Anyway, I got off track there. The point was that this mess was mostly my fault. Which meant I had to do something about it. Things were so busy it was hard for me to sleep. If only the adventurers would stop fighting among themselves for one minute and let me get a nap in. Not to mention that so many of them were flooding our own dungeon and making it to the storage room area that the dam was about to break.

So basically, just as I decided it was finally time for me to do something, *he* appeared.

"Keima! Sure are a lot of people here, huh? Got any open rooms?"

"Wataru! No spare rooms, but you've come at the perfect time." Wataru the Hero of Debt. It would be fair to say that

he was just as strong as a dragon. Probably. Surely. Yeah, definitely.

A brilliant idea dawned upon me the second I saw him.  
“Wataru, let’s go beat the dragon.”

“Wha?!”

Indeed. If I had Wataru beat the dragon and send it running, then everything would solve itself! (Looking back, I was probably sleep deprived when I thought of that plan.)

□ □ □

“So yeah, I was wondering if you’d let us beat the crap out of Igni.”

“Fuckin’ what, Keima? That’s not what we agreed on.”  
Ittetsu glared at me.

“Sorry, I said that poorly. I was wondering if you’d let us kick her out of Tsia Mountain.”

“You want me to drive my daughter out of her own home? Huh?” He glared at me again.

“Just for now. I never said she couldn’t come back.”

“...Ah, I getcha.” Ittetsu seemed to realize what I was getting at.

Indeed. I would have Wataru the Hero beat Igni, then let her flee to some distant mountain. That would send the dragon away from here and let beloved peace return to my town. Once the dust had settled, Igni could come back without a horde of adventurers after her, which would be fine with Ittetsu. I would hate to see all this tasty DP go, but I wanted peace and rest more than DP.

“But y’know, couldn’t Igni just fuckin’ leave on her own?”

“People would probably interpret that as her stretching her wings before coming back.”

“Yeah, true. And she would be comin’ back. It’s important they think she got beaten out, I get ya.” Ittetsu was as quick on the uptake as ever.

“So, who’s gonna be taking out Igni, huh? You?”

"Don't be stupid. Legends are busy people, and I don't intend to start a legend about how I beat Laverio's guardian dragon. I'm gonna let Wataru have all the glory. Remember him? He's the Hero that came to your place from mine."

"Aaah... that guy. Yeah, he could send Igni running."

*Woah. Wataru's strong enough for Ittetsu to back him up like that?* "But is that Hero gonna help you?"

"I can make it happen." So I said, but he had already said that he didn't mind helping me fight the dragon. He was like, "Sure!" and that was that. Actually, he was so casual about it that I got kinda suspicious. "I'll be going with 'im, too. Now here's the plan for how we're gonna make it look like Igni got beat."

"I'm listenin'."

And so, Ittetsu and I began discussing our battle strategy.

First, I brought up how Wataru tended to negotiate with monsters that could talk. He had done so after encountering Rin the wolf-shaped Slime in my dungeon way back when. Then, I brought up how Igni was letting adventurers return alive. That gave her the perfect opportunity to play the innocent little dragon that definitely meant no harm.

"So basically, we want to get them talking, then have them agree on Igni leaving and not coming back. All we need to do is make sure Wataru gets fooled."

"Hold it, Keima, there's a fuckin' problem with that," said Ittetsu with his gravelly voice.

"A problem?"

"Yeah. Igni fuckin' hates lies. If she makes a promise like that, she ain't gonna come back. We wanna avoid that."

*Alright. No telling lies, then.*

"Hmm. What about something like 'Crap, I lost! I gotta get out of here!'"

"Yeah, that could work. But won't that mean they gotta fight?" *Yeah, I guess I couldn't exactly bring Wataru over for a duel in Je\*ga.*

"How about setting a trap for her?"

"A trap? What kinda trap is Igni gonna fall for?"

"I think I'll roll with us bringing Igni an offering of beer. She'll get drunk and we'll tie her up while she's down. When she wakes up, we'll have a sword in her face, and bam. That's when she'll run away."

"Oooh! Yeah, that's a trap she'd fall for! Who fuckin' wouldn't, really?"

Thus was established the Yamata no Orochi strategy. It was a historical strategy used even in Japanese religious myths.

"But, will humans really believe in Igni givin' up like that?"

"Huh? Well, I guess cutting off one of her horns will make the whole thing more convincing than just a verbal promise."

"Break one of Igni's horns? The fuck is wrong with you, she's not even married."

"I dunno why you'd expect me to know about dragon culture, but I get what you're implying." I was probably suggesting the equivalent of cutting off half her hair or something. "Maybe she could give us some treasure? I'm sure you can think of something for this. Put an insignia in a crystal ball and call it a, uh, dragon ball."

"What the fuck're you talking about?"

I took out a crystal ball about as large as a basketball. It was the old thing I made with a trash-quality crystal back when I was practicing {Create Golem}. It was spotless without a single scratch.

"Just put a mark inside this and it's done. The mark could be... the thing on your shoulder." There was a tattoo-esque birthmark on Ittetsu's shoulder. All I had to do was copy it.

"Oh, this thing? Sounds good. Does look kinda like a fire element thing."

"We'll say that Igni had the same mark on her since birth. Guess I'll make the mark out of rubies to sell the effect."

"Hey, I'll cover the rubies. Those're about 50,000 DP, so

yeah. Got enough time to finish it?"

"Won't be a problem if I start now."

"Alright. I'm countin' on ya, Keima. And bring it here once you're done so Igni can enchant it a little. That'll sell it a bit more," said Ittetsu before giving me 50,000 DP. That was enough for me to make fifty of the balls, but no need for him to know that. Consider it a research and development fee.

"By the way. I want to ask for your help if things get a little too spicy."

"My help? What, ya need more DP?"

"No, not that. If Igni gets so drunk or sleepy she forgets our strategy, she might go a little wild. Hopefully you can step in and stop her if it comes to that."

"Aaah... yeah, that could happen," said Ittetsu with a nod.

"Better you deal with her than letting a Hero actually fight her."

"Hell yeah. I'd kill the shit outta any Hero that scratched my cute little daughter." *Sword slices are just scratches to her, huh? Wait... it's feeling kinda hot in here.*

"Uh, Ittetsu? It's kinda hot."

"Ah! My bad, Keima. I remembered somethin' and got kinda pissed." Ittetsu cooled down on the spot. "Igni had a cut on her neck when she came back. It was just a flesh wound, but y'know."

"On her neck, huh?"

"Apparently a human guy got a good cut on her... I'll beat the shit out of him if I ever find him."

"Pretty sure a single punch from you would kill most humans. Though anyone strong enough to hurt Igni would probably survive." I gave the soon to be fatally wounded victim my sympathy, then told Ittetsu the signal I'd give if I needed his help. I would bring a piece of paper with a magic circle drawn on it, and burning it would be my sign.

"If Igni gets too drunk, how about I switch'er out with Redra? Not like humans can tell the difference between dragons."

“...I dunno, I feel like people will be able to tell the difference between a Red Dragon and a Flame Dragon.”

“You think so? Ahh, yeah, you’re probably right. But they do look a lot alike, y’know. Like mother like daughter and all that. I sure felt that way when they both dried off the same way after taking a magma bath.”

“Look, I don’t wanna hear that.” I simply did not want to hear about how they wiped their bodies after bathing. For more reasons than one.

“Alright. Anyway, you can use these chains to tie down Igni.” Ittetsu lent me some red chains. Apparently, he had made them for punishing Igni, and they would last a full ten seconds even when she struggled as hard as she could.

“Oh, thanks. I’ll call them the Salamander Chains to make them sound important to everyone else.”

“Heh, just calling them what they are, huh?”

“I’ve gotten kinda tired of excessively fancy names lately.” I could just claim Narikin had given them to me. Nobody would doubt the friend of an A-Ranker, construction magic specialist, and dragon expert. *Anyway, I need to brief Igni on all this. She’s the one getting attacked, after all.*

□ □ □

Gozou, the representative for all the adventurers in town, came to my office. I knew what he was here for. He wanted to talk about the upcoming dragon hunt. I put down the Beddhist bible, which I was writing in, and leaned back to listen to him.

Gozou spoke first. “Are ye insane, Keima?”

“Why do you ask? If you’re talking about the dragon hunt, then yes, I’m sane.” I let out a sigh. Gozou scratched his cheek awkwardly.

“Sure, I did say that ye, me, Roppe, and Wataru could beat the dragon if we worked together.”

“Then what’s the problem? We’re just making that a

reality.”

“Lemme ask again. Are ye insane?” asked Gozou, glaring at me. But the fact he didn’t seem scary at all was a clear sign he wasn’t actually angry. Really, he seemed kinda happy about the whole affair.

“The town’s been too busy for too long. It’s cutting into my sleep. Which means it’s time to have the dragon at the center of all of this retire.”

“Hunting a dragon cause ye wanna sleep, huh? Hahaha! It’s crazy, but just what I’d expect from ye!” Gozou clapped his hands and laughed. “Let’s do it, Keima. I got everything ready, cause I figured it’d come to this one day.”

“Yeah?”

“Course I did! All adventurers got the same dreams they wanna make come true one day. Reach A-Rank, conquer a famous dungeon, and... hunt a dragon!” Gozou thumped his chest. Normally I’d find that pretty reassuring, but this time of all times I didn’t want him going a step too far.

“Anyway, ye said ye had a plan?”

“Of course. I wouldn’t do this without a plan.”

“Sure, sure. How many people we gonna get? Everyone in town’ll be ready by tomorrow morning if ye need’m.”

*Everyone in town? What, is everyone as annoyed as I am?*

“This plan involves something I want to keep secret if possible. The smaller our group, the better. I basically only need myself, Kuro, and Ichika on this hunt.” More people would make the behind-the-scenes stuff harder to pull off. Nobody would be suspicious of us working in a small group if we claimed we had a secret plan we wanted to keep hidden. The ideal outcome was us going alone and coming back with a convincing story of having won.

“Wait, ye mean ye don’t even need Wataru?”

“Er, actually, we need him too. I forgot that he’s important to the plan.”

“R-Right. Ye surprised me there.” *Yeah, I forgot it’ll be important to push all the credit onto him.*

"Everyone else can protect the town while we're gone, I guess."

"Roger that. Wait, hold on, don't tell me you're gonna leave me and Roppe behind too?"

"Hey, you don't have to come if you don't want to."

"Hahaha, I'd come even if you told me not to! We're Team Bacchus!" *What's that, a drinking team for drunks? But sure, Wataru kinda comes with Gozou and Roppe, I guess. We could say that this dragon hunt is a joint mission between Team Bacchus and my party.*

"Y'know, I never did catch yer party's name, Keima." And now that he mentioned it, I sure never came up with a name for my party. Not to mention that Ichika wasn't an official member of the party, she was just coming along as a slave. *Oh, maybe I should bring Rokuko with me since she actually is in the party? Nah, never mind, I don't want to.*

"We don't have a name. Feel free to think up one on your own."

"Yeah? I've got some ideas for ye, then. The Pope and his Beddhists, Guardians of the Inn's Sleep, the Hard Working Chief and his Goren Workers, the Dreamy Paradise Harem. How about one of them?"

"What even the hell? Do you really think of me as, like, some kinda jerk with a harem?"

"Nah, those are just what everyone else calls your party." It seemed that those were the adventurers' names for my party. *I've never heard any of those before...*

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*Huh? Wait. What's with the Hard Working Chief? I've been working so hard lately that people actually call me that, huh. This is definitely a problem. I'm gonna have to sleep for days once this dragon mess is over.*

□ □ □

We got the Flame Dragon hunting squad together without

any issues, then went to Tsia Mountain's peak after some quick prep time. Thus began the Dragon Extermination Quest. We had all the equipment we needed for climbing mountains. I even got mountain climbing shoes ready. They were oddly expensive at 100 DP a boot, but that was small change to us now. Or rather, small DP. Okay that doesn't sound great.

"I'm counting on you, town chief! Get revenge for my sweet, sweet radishes!"

"He's got a Hero with him, I'm sure he'll be fine. But man, the town chief turning into a Dragon Slayer huh? Seems like this mess might finally be over."

"I wonder if dragon steak is any good. Hey, Keima, mind bringing me back some meat?"

The villagers showered me with warm encouragement as I left. *But dragon steak, huh? Let's see who menti— Niku, stop drooling. Cows are bred to be eaten, I'm sure they taste better. Not everything that's big, rare, and strong will taste good.*

"Keima! Are you okay? Are you forgetting anything? Did you get enough sleep?"

"Kuro, I came to see you off!"

Two voices rang out and the plaza immediately fell silent. But it was just Rokuko and Maiodore there. Was there something weird about that?

"Um, Keima, are you listening to me?"

"Huh? Oh, yeah, definitely. Don't worry, I have everything with me."

"Do you have your weapon? Your food? Your handkerchief... Ah, Niku's using it. Here, have mine." Rokuko took out a white, laced handkerchief out of her cleavage and shoved it into my face. It smelled nice. *Is this your work, Ichika? I can see you giving her a stealthy thumbs up over there.*

Niku was doing her own thing, with Maiodore giving her a tight hug goodbye. *How sweet.*

"So, did you get enough sleep?"

"Yeah, I'm actually so awake I can kinda see the world with perfect clarity."

"Riiight. You definitely seem sleep deprived to me. Are you really gonna be okay...?"

I actually hadn't slept much since I had spent yesterday making the dragon ball and getting Igny ready. All this for pinning the credit on Wataru. If a Hero like Wataru brought back an obvious trophy like the dragon ball, everyone would know he was the true victor. I had worked hard to ensure that, and hard work did mean sleep deprivation.

But no worries, it wasn't a problem. I could get all the sleep I needed once the battle was over.

"Also, don't cheat on me just because I can't go with you, okay?"

"Uh, what? This is a dragon extermination quest, and I'm just going to a dungeon. I'll be back later today." The crowd of villagers stirred at the word "cheat." *What, do they know about Rokuko's situation? I guess she's had plenty of time to talk to them as the owner of the inn, and as a waitress.*

"Okay then! Bye, Keima! H-Have a goodbye k-k-k... nmm... anyway, bye! Be safe!"

"Yeah, ow, see you, ow, okay stop hitting me out of embarrassment, ow." Rokuko pounded her fists against my chest with red cheeks. *What does she even want from me? An actual goodbye kiss? I dunno who told her about those, but I'm not gonna do that in front of this many people. Also, no dinner for Ichika tonight.*

*...What's with you, Wataru? Stop looking around everywhere, we're leaving.* And so, we began climbing the mountain as the crowd saw us off.

Incidentally, Gozou told me that everyone fell silent because my first wife Rokuko arrived while I was with Niku, and then on top of that she said not to cheat on her. Any crowd would react like that, according to him. Not to mention that Maiodore (who was known to call herself Niku's

fiancée) came to see Niku off. The daughter of Tsia's archduke there while Rokuko said "don't cheat on me" arose the possibility of an enormous scandal involving the archduke himself.

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*Uh, no?! Rokuko's my partner and Niku's my dakimakura! I'm not doing anything scandalous like that! I'm not, really!*

"Haha, Rokuko sure is in love with you, huh, Keima?"  
*Watch it, Wataru, don't tell Haku anything she doesn't need to know. Seriously, don't say anything. I'm not kidding here.*  
"Y'know, Keima, Neruneh didn't come to see us off. Know anything about that...?" asked Wataru with a kind of gloomy look. *Oh, he was searching for Neruneh.*

"Neruneh spent all night praying for our success. I'm sure she just slept through us leaving."

"O-Oh, I see! But... wait, isn't Beddhist praying just sleeping...?" *Yes, I'm saying she just overslept.* "Anyway, Keima, what finally convinced you to go hunt a dragon? It sure seemed like you weren't interested in it."

"Well. I'm guessing you want to know why I would do this when fewer people in Goren means less money for me, right?" *Heh, well, I already prepared an answer for that. Take this!* "The thing is, this will just put things back to normal. Everyone was talking about this being temporary, and we're going to prove that right. Don't worry about me at all."

"...Oh, I get it. This is totally fine with me, don't worry."  
*Huh? Sure were a lot of implications bundled up in there... Anyway, can we take a break? I'm getting tired.*

□ □ □

There weren't any roads on Tsia Mountain. You just walked straight up the side of the cliff toward the peak. Even with Golem Assistance my legs had to pump up and down, which was tiring in its own way. The air getting thinner kind of

bothered me too.

"Oh, by the way, just so we're clear. I've been talking about hunting the dragon, but our goal here isn't actually to kill the dragon." I spoke loudly so everyone, especially Wataru, could hear me. Wataru, who was strong enough that Ittetsu said he could beat Igni.

"Speaking of which, I still don't know your crazy plan, Keima."

"Right, right. The idea here is that we're going to negotiate. Be sure not to rush in swinging."

"Negotiating with a dragon, huh? How likely is that to work?"

"Probably about seventy percent." It's technically one hundred percent since I'm fixing the match, but who knows how Igni might mess things up.

"So there's a thirty percent chance that we fight it."

"Sure, but it won't kill us even if we lose. Everyone else coming back alive proves it."

"We're planning something nobody else did, so you can't say that for sure, but... hey. I know better than to doubt one of your plans, Keima." *And worst-case scenario, I just summon Ittetsu and say that was my true hidden plan.*

"Anyway, this is pretty exhausting. Can we take a break?" I asked for a break about halfway up the mountain. We had been walking for an hour, which was more than long enough to justify a break. Though they turned me down when I asked for one thirty minutes ago.

"Keima, ye know it's only been an hour, yeah...?" said Gozou, exasperated. "Eh. Can't say I didn't expect this anyhow. Yer not exactly the most fit person out there... but we can't waste time here. Wataru, carry him on yer back, would ye?"

"Sure." Wataru took out a shoulder-mounted seat and put it on. "Oh, is this why you asked me to come?"

"Fat chance. Yer too strong fer that... R-Right, Keima?"

"Who knows, maybe I just wanted to feel on top of the

world. Maybe I should get a medal for using a Hero like this?"

"Yer sounding crazier by the minute, Keima. Go ahead, Wataru."

"Leave it to me." And so, Wataru carried me on his back with a shoulder seat that looked like something Ninomiya Sontoku might wear. *Aaah, feels good to be on the top of the world. The shaking actually feels pretty nice if I close my eyes. Now I'm sleepy.*

"Yer actually making him carry ye, huh? Don't ye feel a little ashamed of yerself, as an adventurer?" Gozou sighed, looking at me on top of Wataru's back.

"Huh? You're the one who suggested this, remember? And I'm the slowest walker here, anyway. This is simply the most effective strategy. I would expect nothing less than this perfect logic from our town's resident adventurer."

"Sheesh, Keima. Yer tiring out our main firepower here, y'know? That thing's supposed to be for carryin' the wounded."

"Fascinating. So you mean to tell me that he'll carry me back if nobody gets hurt or dies."

Gozou shook his head with further exasperation. It seemed that this world also had throwing up one's hands as a gesture for giving up. "There's the girls walkin, y'know? Ichika or lil' Kuro would be better off up there."

"Ahaha, what're you talking about, my dude? Not a slave in the world that's tryna rest while their master's walking. Like, real talk, I should prolly be the one carrying Master on my back right now," said Ichika with Niku nodding beside her. *Oh yeah, my party members are all slaves. I kinda forgot about that.*

"Wataru, ye gotta back me up here."

"I don't mind, Keima's pretty light. At this rate we'll reach the summit before noon hits." Wataru said he didn't mind, so Gozou moved on and asked his partner Roppe for help.

"And whaddaye think about this, Roppe?"

"As an adventurer I think it's kinda bad, but it's Keima we're talking about, so who cares?"

"So yer saying I'm in the wrong here?" *Democracy says yes. And it's just a fact that we're moving a lot faster now. Like Wataru said, at this pace we'll be easily hitting the summit before noon.*



No doubt about it, I was dead weight to them. *Maybe I should work out a little. I am a Hero too, after all, so... Nah. Sounds like a pain. I spend all day in the inn usually, there's no point in my getting buff. I'll let Wataru handle all the dangerous adventures that demand a lot of physical strength and stuff. It's more my style as a Dungeon Master to just hang out inside and away from the action.*

□ □ □

Eventually, we hit the summit. It was just about noon. Everything was going according to plan.

There were traces of camps left behind by other adventurers who went after the Flame Dragon. The entrance to the [Flame Caverns] was close by, so resting there for a bit before going inside made sense.

Some of the stuff there looked new, but according to Gozou the camp had been set up three days ago. That made sense, given that the people who had challenged Igny three days ago lost and came back. So yeah, we decided to rest there before entering the [Flame Caverns].

For safety's sake, we searched the area before settling down. I volunteered to do that myself since I had been carried up. And after erasing the "Current Invaders: 0" message left by Ittetsu with my foot, I finished my investigation and met back up with them.

"Doesn't look like there are any other adventurers here. No monsters, either, so we should be able to have a quiet lunch." Incidentally, Ittetsu had also guaranteed that no monsters would be launching surprise attacks on us.

"Alright dudes and dudettes, it's eating time! We've got some hella sweet lunches from Kinue!"

"By the way, you're not getting any dinner tonight, Ichika. Enjoy your food while it lasts."

"But why?!"

"Punishment for corrupting Rokuko's innocent mind."

"I just wanted to help you two have a happy life, man!"

"Hahaha. Want some red chili paste to drink?"

"That's not even a liquid! Master, c'mon, gimme a break!" pleaded Ichika as we began to eat our sandwiches. As you would expect from Kinue's home cooking, they were tasty with fresh and crunchy vegetables.

"...The sun's still high up. If things go well, we should be home before nighttime."

"Keima, don't be forgettin' that we gotta explore the [Flame Caverns] too. Though we only gotta go to the fifth floor, if the rumors're right."

"It'll be fine, we know exactly where to go. Just look at this map I made," I said, taking out a map I had made with Ittetsu yesterday. There was nothing odd about me having a map up to the fifth floor boss room, considering just how many adventurers had fled the dungeon after making it that far.

"By the way, the red line shows the route with the least monsters... supposedly."

"Now that's somethin' else."

"Wow, I didn't expect you to prepare for this so well. I'm impressed, Keima."

*Sorry Gozou, Roppe, but Ittetsu spoon-fed me all this info.*

"Hold on a second, Gozou. This map is just a little too accurate, don't you think?" said Wataru, sending a chill down my spine. "It's almost like someone cut the dungeon in half and drew this map while looking from above. I don't think anyone could draw something like this just from asking around."

*Oh crap. I was too thorough here, I guess.*

"If I'm right about this... Keima must have gone to the [Flame Caverns] himself to gather information! Am I right, Keima?" *Yeah, in a way! Oh man... should I confirm or deny this?*

"Nah, dude, he obviously just bought it from someone who used a map skill on the place. That's the kinda thing

you can buy straight from the Guild. And it's so accurate 'cause Niku and I double-checked it all. Am I right, girl?"

"Yes. We double-checked it."

"Oh. That's one way of doing it." *Whew! Ichika, nice save! You just earned your dinner back. And Niku, good job on playing along.*

"Yeah, thanks to the dragon I have plenty of spare cash." *Let's go with that.*

"Ye just buying the info and having other people check it sounds legit to me."

"Agreed, it wouldn't be hard for Keima to get it ready."

Gozou and Roppe seemed to have fallen for it. *Whew that was close. For a second I thought they'd figure out I was in with Ittetsu.*

Once we were done with that slightly nerve-wracking lunch, we dove into the [Flame Caverns]. Though the area around the summit was technically part of the dungeon, just like the town was part of my dungeon, so accurately speaking we were already in it.

"By the way," began Wataru, "Did you know Flame Dragons are said to be the children of flame spirits and Red Dragons? I read about it in the imperial capital's library."

"Huh. Guess that's why they're more fire elemental. Makes sense that a Red Dragon'd be invincible with a flame spirit's power. Did ye know about that, Keima?"

"...I think a friend of mine may have mentioned it once." I walked on, following Niku and Ichika from behind with Gozou and Roppe trailing to provide a rear guard. Wataru was in the center with me, but that was so he could react to threats from the front and back with equal speed. That was a big difference from me and my plan to do exactly nothing if anything happened. *But well, my job was half over the moment I handed over the map. All that's left is acting out the fake negotiations with Igni in the boss room.*

Gozou and Niku sliced through Red Lizards, Ichika and

Roppe dissected them to save space, and Wataru plopped them into {Storage}. Red Slimes were immune to physical damage, so Wataru beat them by just swinging his sword and hitting them with the resulting beam. Heroes and their Magic Blades sure were amazing. *Oh, you'll teach me how to use them too? Sweet. Here's your chance to learn, Niku... use it well.*

"Whew. That's the third Red Slime so far."

"Still less than normal, though. And it's real easy cause they're coming one at a time."

I had Ittetsu put a smattering of monsters on the direct route through to serve as markers. That also avoided drawing suspicion from there being no battles, so it all worked out.

"Anyway, Keima, we're gonna be relying on yer secret plan here... how about ye tell us what it is already?"

"You mentioned that we were going to negotiate, but that's all. How exactly are you planning to do that?"

"Yeah. That's what I wanna hear. Think about how we feel, not even knowin' the plan that might get us killed."

Only after Gozou and Wataru both brought it up did I remember I hadn't given them the details on the plan yet. "Honestly, I'm surprised you both agreed with so few details."

"That's cause we believe in ye, Keima." *Huh, looks like even figureheads earn a lot of trust.*

"Well, alright. Here's my plan — take a look." I took out the red chili paste I had stashed in my {Storage} earlier.

"That's, uh... the chili paste ye were trying to get Ichika to eat, ain't it? What about it?"

"I heard from a certain someone that Flame Dragons love beer and spicy stuff." Incidentally, that certain someone was Narikin, or more accurately, Igni the actual Flame Dragon. There wasn't a more reliable source of information you could hope for.

"I've got beer from my dungeon and plenty of spicy food

handmade by Kinue in my {Storage}. Basically, we'll bait the dragon with its favorite stuff, tie it down once it's drunk, and then force it to have a chat." I took out Ittetsu's Salamander Chains while I explained.

"What're those? I'm feelin' some mighty strong vibes from'm... and what're they made of, anyway?"

"Let's just say I got these from someone who knows a lot about dragons." I put the chains away after Gozou nodded and said they sure looked like they could tie up a dragon.

"Alright... anyway, I want some of that beer too. Gimme some."

"There will be plenty of the same beer at the feast that'll be waiting for us. We're working right now, stay focused."

"Whew! Now we really gotta make this work. Am I right, Roppe? Wataru?"

"Beating a dragon with beer's the Team Bacchus way, really. You're a clever guy, Keima," nodded Roppe.

"Hey, that's the Yamata no Orochi! I get it! Let's get it drunk as heck!" *That's exactly right, Wataru. But don't kill her, okay?*

I ignored Wataru's mention of the Japanese myth and kept walking. Eventually, we reached our destination: the boss room on the fifth floor.

"Oh, there it is."

"Looks like it's eatin' a Red Minotaur... Is that this place's normal boss?"

We opened the door and peered into the room, finding Igni in her dragon form chewing on a Red Minotaur. For a second I wondered if it was fine for her to be eating a midboss, then remembered that basically all of the upper floors were Igni's snack zone. *What a costly daughter. Her Engel coefficient must be off the charts. Or wait, maybe it's not that bad if they use Spawners?*

"Hold on, Keima. I think I remember that dragon."

"Hm?" I didn't expect Wataru's comment.

"I never said anything since I wasn't sure, but that's

definitely the dragon I saw attack a carriage convoy on a city road earlier. I ended up nicking it on the neck, so maybe I shouldn't be here for the negotiations." *Oh, that's something that happened? Gotta say, I'm impressed Wataru managed to hurt a dragon's neck. He's not a Hero for nothing... but, huh. A cut on her neck? That sounds kinda familiar, but whatever. I need to focus.*

"I'll go alone with Kuro first, then."

"Sorry. I should have said something sooner."

"Don't sweat it. My first plan was me going alone with Kuro anyway. It'll probably let its guard down if we go alone." *I want to make sure that Igni remembers the plan, too, so this is perfect.*

"Wataru, I'm counting on you to step in if things go bad. I doubt it'll kill us, but who knows what'll happen if we tick it off enough to break down negotiations."

"You can count on me. Even if it does kill you, I'll be sure to grab your bones and use them to revive you later." *Wait, what? There's revival magic in this world?* "Oh, but the revival has a seventy-five percent chance of failing and costs ten thousand gold each try, but I'm sure you don't mind if I keep going until it works."

"...Yeah, if you're the one paying." *Whew. That spell's way above what most people can do. And dang, ten thousand gold is four times as much as Wataru's total debt. That'd be a trillion yen or something. Oh... maybe the spell's just a performance Haku puts on to gain the faith of her followers? Like, maybe she just uses a Doppelganger (500,000 DP) to pretend the person's been revived. Any changes to personality or memory could be passed off as side effects from the resurrection, so yeah, who knows.*

"Ngh... If I have to, I'll take out a loan for it! I'll cover the journey to the Holy Kingdom too!" *Oh, great, the Church of Lux is involved. Now that's suspicious as hell. Don't tell me the High Priestess is the only recorded case of a successful resurrection. She's obviously a special case.*

"Anyway, time for me to go. I'll call you if the plan goes well."

"Is this really a good idea?"

"Well, I've actually got another plan ready. This is one I really don't want to show if I can help it. Alright, I'm shutting the door... Oh, by the way. Ichika should be able to tell through her collar if I do die. You can run away or follow after me, take your pick."

"...Never thought about using slave collars like that before." But indeed, slave collars unlocked themselves when the master died. Not that this trivia would be relevant here, since I wasn't going to die.

"Keima, don't tell me you kept these two as slaves just for that." *Nope, that's actually so I can be sure they won't spill any dungeon secrets.*

"Also, if it goes well, I'll squeeze Ichika's collar twice to send a signal."

"Whaaat?! Dude, be gentle! Please be gentle!"

"Wireless communication through slave collars...?! Keima, you're setting up a Network of Slave Collars here!" *That sounds like the title of a bad scifi novel.*

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Anyway, I entered the boss room with Niku and shut the door. *Whew... Finally, I can breathe a little.*

"Oh! Welc—"

"Please, oh wise and mighty dragon! Please listen to our pleas! And... I'm with a Hero, remember? I told you this." I shouted as loud as I could to block Igni's greeting. The second half was all in whispers.

I glanced at Niku. She shook her head. That was her signal that she didn't understand what Igni had said. In other words, Igni was speaking in dragon language. Incidentally, she would have hit my leg to stop me if she couldn't understand me either, but I successfully spoke in

human speech. *Either way, we're walking a thin line with the Hero's automatic translator here.*

"Ah! Oh, right!" Igni lowered her voice. Incidentally, maybe thanks to the auto translator, Igni's dragon voice sounded the same as she did when she was in human form. To me, at least.

"I shut the door, but talk quietly. Just in case."

"Okay... Oh, should I morph and talk in human language?" Igni wiped the minotaur blood off her mouth.

"No need for that. I told you to hide the fact you could transform into a human until you left and came back, right?"

"Oh, right! Also, I can talk in human language in dragon form too. I'm not like a dumb Wyvern!"

I knew that from Rokuko. True dragons could talk human language.

"Well, talk to everyone but me in human language, then. That'll be more natural."

"Okay... Oh! Ummm, I forgot to say the greeting you taught me yesterday."

"You sure did. Go ahead, say it loud enough for them to hear behind the door. In human language, of course."

"Okaaaay... Nmm. Very bold of you to interrupt my sleep, tiny one! What brings you to my domain?"

I glanced at Niku, who nodded. Seemed like that was in proper human language.

"Oh mighty dragon! I have brought offerings suitable for your stature!" I took out the barrels of beer I had stashed in my {Storage}.

"I see! Offerings! Er... Um, uncle. You sure I can drink these? They look super tasty." *Don't drop the act out of nowhere.*

"You know we have Ittetsu's permission for all this. Just don't drink so much you forget the plan, alright?"

"Okay. Ummm, right, gotta continue... Oho! I see this is beer!" The problem was, her lines felt kind of deadpan. I was starting to get nervous that they would realize she was

acting.

"Please drink your utmost fill! And have these as well!"

"Th-Those... look super red! I love them!" Igni's dragon eyes shone. *Hold up, your true personality is showing.*

"It is known as red chili paste! I heard that dragons love spicy food!"

"Uh, uh, uh-huh, we totally d— Y-You have chosen wisely! Very wisely, perhaps!" She remembered mid-sentence that she was supposed to be acting and hurriedly corrected herself.

Incidentally, she was speaking in a kind of formal tone that Ittetsu had said would make her appear a lot more dignified and intimidating. The fact he just said "appear" and not "be" was probably because Igni was still only a young girl dragon at just three hundred years of age. That said, given that the Dragon King is a dungeon core too, he probably wasn't more than a thousand years old. *I wonder if he gets treated like a prince instead. Maybe he's like a young twenty-year old hero king.*

"Nom, nom, mmm, so good! So spicy! So goood! Th-This sure goes nice with Minotaur meat!" My random thoughts were interrupted by Igni loudly chewing on the Red Minotaur covered in red chili paste. She washed it all down by chugging beer from a barrel.

"All you need to do is get the smell of beer on you so you can pretend to be drunk, alright? Don't drink too much."

"I knooooow, c'mon. Nmm, nmm, fwaaah! This beer tastes great too! I could drink it all day!" *Well, it is in fact the best beer I can buy from the Catalog... It's high-grade sake. And a whole barrel of it, too.*

*Also, holy crap, Minotaur meat cooked by Igni's fire smells so freaking good. Someone gimme some white rice, I wanna go to town.*

"...Master."

"Yeah." Niku was drooling too, so we decided to eat as well. It had taken a decent amount of time to get here after

eating lunch. And I always brought some DP around with me for safety's sake, so I went ahead and bought white rice and some tare sauce for both of us.

"Oh? What, you're gonna eat too, uncle?"

"Give us some of that Minotaur. We got hungry watching you."

"Sure! Oh, one more Minotaur, please! I want another Minotaur!" Ittetsu must have been listening in. Another Red Minotaur was summoned into the room, then immediately killed by Igni. Niku sliced off some of the meat, and Igni heated it up for us. *This is survival of the fittest. This is nature's law of the strong eating the weak. And thus, we eat Minotaur steak.*

"...It tastes, good."

"Yep, pretty dang good." Niku and I chewed away at our steaks. And while we ate, Igni chugged the beer.

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*Whew, that was some good eating. I'm stuffed. Niku seems satisfied too. I wiped her mouth for her with a handkerchief. Then mine. Meat and rice really did go together well. Oh, {Purification}, {Purification}, {Pur-} Wait, I shouldn't cast it on Igni. Leaving the beer smell will be important for later.*

*...Wait, she somehow drank five whole barrels while we were eating. Isn't that kind of a crazy speed?* Nervous, I asked Igni. "Hey, Igni. Are you okay?"

"Srbroo I'm shoo okaaay!" *Yeah, she's not okay.* The silver lining was that, according to Niku, she was still talking in dragon language.

I took my Salamander Chains out of {Storage}. She was drunk enough for this stage of the plan.

"Ah! Wh-Why do you have those, uncle...?!"

"Okaaay, just let me chain you uuup. Be a good giirl."

"Oh, right, it's our plan. Go ahead, tie me up. I promised I'd let you!"

"Don't mention the plan to anyone. Okay? It's a promise."

“Uh huh, it’s a promiiiiise!”

“Are you ready? This was all a warm up for the real plot, really.”

“I’ll be fiiiine.” *I dunno about that.*

But in any case, once Igni was chained up I sent the signal for Ichika’s collar to squeeze. Twice, and gently. That was what we had agreed upon. It wasn’t long before Wataru opened the door and came inside.

“Are you alright? Wait... this is...”

“...Ye actually got the Flame Dragon chained up...”

“I’d say I was impressed if I hadn’t already expected you to win.”

“And this’s why I was saying Master would be just fine, bros.” Ichika spoke while rubbing her neck a little. “...Is it just me or does it smell hella tasty in here, huh? Master?”

I used my right to remain silent.

“Good job, Keima. I guess it’s time to negotiate?”

“Yep. It’s all ready for you. Point your sword right at it, Wataru, and say the words. Get out of here! Your sword’s the one that hurt its neck before, so it’ll know you’re being real!”

“...Okay. I hate to steal all the credit from you, but I know this is a dangerous job.” *Hey, don’t sweat it, my man. I don’t want any glory; you can have it all for yourself.*

“Dragon! Listen to me!”

“Nhaaaah...?”

Wataru thrust his sword in Igni’s direction. “Either you die here, or you leave the mountain. Take your pick.” *Oh, he said the exact line I told him to. Now all Igni has to say is “Oh no, I’ve lost! I’ll leave the mountain.”*

## **# Igni’s Perspective**

A sword pointed her way. “Either you die here, or you leave the mountain. Take your pick.”

*Oh, I remember this question. I think I should say I’ll leave the mountain.* And so, Igni opened her mouth to

answer... only to notice that it was Wataru pointing his sword at her.

“...Ah! S-So you have, nm, ahem. So you have come! As promised, I will welcome you!” roared Igni in Wataru’s direction, still constrained by Ittetsu’s chains.

“Do you know what situation you’re in?”

“Oh, right. I’ll get everything ready.” Igni’s head was full of welcoming Wataru. *Hm? What’s with these chains? They’re in my way. Hmph!* Igni tensed her body as hard as she could, blasting the chains into red dust within a single moment.

“Ngh! Everyone, fall back!” shouted Wataru, and everyone there — excluding Wataru and Keima — jerked with fear.

“Ngh, I can’t move! Ye gods, this pressure...! This is a true dragon...!”

“So much pressure just from building up power...! This thing’s a monster!”

“I didn’t expect this...”

“Holy FRIGGIN’ crackers this is scary! I dunno if I’ve ever been so friggin’ scared I can’t even move before!”

Gozou, Roppe, Niku, and Ichika all tensed up. Igni panicked a little after seeing that. It was then that she realized she hadn’t put on the bracelet that contained her power.

“Hold up, guys!”

“Get back, Keima! Uwooooh!” Wataru charged forward, slashing at Igni. That made her happy. She interpreted that as him wanting to be welcomed with a fight. Redra had done the same when welcoming her daughter back. *Okay, let’s show each other what we’ve got!*

“Gaaahahaha! Come at me, little one! Show me your poweeer!” Igni laughed, feeling great.

## **# Keima’s Perspective**

Red flames burst from the Flame Dragon's chin as it prepared to breathe fire onto the Hero. But the Hero noticed and slid beneath the dragon's head to slam the hilt of his blade up against its chin. Fire exploded within the dragon's forcibly shut mouth. But Flame Dragons were avatars of fire. Not even the most powerful fire in the world — not even their own fire breath could hurt them. To the Flame Dragon, it was as if they had sighed with their mouth shut and nothing more.

"Leave this to me, everyone! Get out of here!"

"How are you gonna handle this?!"

"I'm going to... defeat the dragon!" The Hero faced the enormous dragon without taking a single step back, for behind him were his allies. "I'll be fine! Doon't worry, I'm sure it'll calm down once I cut off its tail and make a steak!" He joked, and the dragon spat out fire as if laughing.

"Graaah! You amuse me! Let us see if your bite can live up to your bark! Ahaha, what a fantastic day! I will be forever grateful for this chance encounter! Now, let us have our fun!"

"You should know just how dangerous my bite is! Don't tell me you forgot who put that scratch on your neck!"

"Oh, I remember! And that is exactly why I am so overjoyed! You are strong, and that is what I love! Let's see if you can keep up with me, little one...! And try not to die!"

"UWOOOOOH!"

The dragon and Hero bantered among each other. It was as if they were speaking dialogue straight from a play. It was a scene of legends, fit for the Hero's courage. Indeed, we were bearing witness to the birth of a legend...

...Or at least, I wish that's what I was thinking. Instead, my mind was filled with one thought as I vacantly watched Igni and Wataru battle at superhuman levels: *How did everything go so wrong? We were almost there, then Igni ruined it all. What got into her? Why is she acting like a cheap villain with all that "Show me your power!" junk?*

"C'mon, Keima, we gotta get outta here! We're just gonna be dead weight to him!"

"Ahhh, yeah, right..." *Oh, now I get it. Wataru's the guy Ittetsu was talking about, the one that cut Igni. Guess I can't blame her for going nuts here. To be honest, she looks like her one true love came knocking to marry her.*

"You don't even care, do you, Keima? If I had balls, I'd wish they were as big as yours," said Roppe.

"Yeah, that's just how Master is," said Ichika with a shrug.

"We're very proud of him," added Niku.

Gozou grabbed my arm and dragged me out of the Boss Room. *Alright, what to do now. Just kidding. I made a plan B with Ittetsu specifically for this situation. He's probably gonna try to kick the shit out of Wataru for hurting his daughter, but well, I'm sure Wataru will survive. And I can trust Ittetsu to hold back on hurting one of my allies. Definitely. For sure. I mean, maybe he won't. Maybe a one percent chance of him letting loose. Maybe.*

"Listen up, team. I've actually got one more trick up my sleeve. Now's as good a time as any to pull it out."

"Oh! R-Right, ye mentioned somethin' like that."

"Conveniently, there's a tiny room nearby. Let's move there for safety first." I guided Gozou and the others to the small room, thereby removing all invaders from the passageway, which would allow Ittetsu to place himself there. I then took out a scroll with what looked like a summoning circle on it from {Storage} and threw it into the hall.

A storm of fire circled in the hall. White smoke flew into the air, blocking our vision. When it cleared there was a giant lizard the size of a small truck in the hallway — Ittetsu the Salamander. His red scales were evidence of his fire attunement. He was covered in intimidating scars, but he was actually a gentle giant. And right after being summoned...

"Fuckin' idiot! Summon me faster!" He yelled before

charging into the room where Igni and Wataru were fighting. *Hmm, I wonder which of them he's rushing to beat the crap out of. Probably Wataru, since he was listening in?*

"K-Keima? The hell was that?" asked Gozou hesitantly.

"...Uhhh, he's a friend of mine."

"Oh, crap. Heeey, Wataru! That lizard guy's a friend, don't hurt him!"

"Wha?! Oh, sorry!"

"Guh?!" I peeked into the Boss Room and saw that I was a second too late. Wataru had just landed a clean hit on Ittetsu. Probably a counter, by the looks of it. Unsurprisingly, Igni had frozen up after seeing it.

"Alright, Wataru! Come over here!"

"Whaaa?! B-But the dragon...!"

"Don't worry about it! C'mere! Ittetsu, you take care of the Flame Dragon!"

"Beh, guh, th-that kinda hurt... Tch, alright! Leave her to me!" He held up his claw like one might give a thumbs up, which was quite dependable. *I heard that tongue click, though. Seemed like he was rushing to beat up Wataru after all.*

"Don't mess with my life! Go away, Da—"

"GRAAAAH!"

"Nghaah?!" Before Igni could finish saying "Dad," Ittetsu gave her a punch to the cheek.

"Why would you do that?! You jerk!" She lifted up her log-like tail and slammed it against Ittetsu.

"That fuckin' hurts! Just shut it already!" But Ittetsu took the blow without flinching. He said it hurt, but it sure didn't look like it. *I'm guessing a human hit by that tail would've been sent flying until they slammed against the wall and turned into paste, yeah? Dads sure are strong.*

And so, another inhuman battle began between Ittetsu and Igni... literally inhuman this time. It was like two giant monsters fighting in a movie, but I ignored that and focused on dragging Wataru out of the Boss Room. Once out, I shut

the door behind us.

“E-Er, Keima? What in the world was that...?”

“That, my friend, was my backup plan. I mentioned it on the way here, remember?”

“Ohhh... I do remember you talking about having another plan. But, er, that was actually it?”

“Hey, would I lie to you? That was my trump card.” I cracked open the Boss Room door and peered inside. Ittetsu was in the middle of executing what strongly resembled a Kubi-Nage judo throw on Igni. *Wow, he’s got some skill.*

I kept watching the action for a bit, until eventually Gozou clapped a hand down on my shoulder. “Hey, Keima. Y’know, I’m just askin’ this to be sure, but uh, would that happen to be Salamander, the spirit of fire?”

“Well, he’s definitely a Salamander. We’re buds,” I answered, which made Gozou’s eyes shoot wide open in surprise.

“Y-Y-Ye, ye gotta be kiddin’ me! That’s friggin’ Salamander! The spirit o’ fire itself!”

“Hey, don’t yell in my ear like that. I can hear you just fine already.”

“Water, earth, fire, air. Each of the four primary elements are ruled by spirits, and Salamander’s the spirit of fire! He’s a legend that even kids know about! And yer friends with ‘im?!” *Uhhh, he’s actually a Salamander-type Dungeon Core, so I’m not entirely sure what to say about that. You’re making it sound like there’s just one Salamander, but uh... Huh.*

“Salamander... I see. Flame Dragons are pure fire, which means they won’t be able to lay a scratch on Salamander.” Wataru analyzed the situation calmly.

“Ah, friggin’ hell! Yer always surprisin’ me Keima, but not even I expected ye to have an ace like this up yer sleeve! To think you’ve got Salamander servin’ y—”

“Hey, fuckin’ dwarf! I can hear you, and I’m not fuckin’ serving anybody!”

“Gaaah! F-Forgive me, Salamander! I, er, I meant to say to think ye DON’T have Salamander servin’ ye!”

Ittetsu had surprisingly sharp ears, and Gozou instinctively threw himself on the ground to apologize after getting yelled at. Despite the fact that said ground was extremely hot. It wasn’t on the level of a heated frying pan, but it was at least as hot as a sauna.

“Dwarves live in such close harmony with fire and earth that they owe fealty to Salamander the spirit of fire and Gnome the spirit of earth,” explained Wataru.

“By the way, you just punched him hard in the mouth.”

“He’s the one who rushed me down out of nowhere! My body reacted before I could think! Help me apologize to him, Keima!”

“Sure, but that’ll be another favor you owe me.” I glanced back in the room and saw that Ittetsu was holding Igni down against the ground. *Alright, should be safe to go in there now.*

“Anyway, don’t worry, Ittetsu’s nicer than he looks. I’m sure he’ll forgive you.” *After a few punches, at least.*

## **# Ittetsu’s Perspective**

Ittetsu, having finally been called over by Keima and given the opportunity to act, charged into the Boss Room. But his first target was the human called Wataru. Reason being, according to what he had heard, Wataru was the man who had hurt Igni’s neck — in other words, the man she had fallen in love with at first sight.

“Take thiiiiis!”

“Huh?!”

Ittetsu launched a full-powered punch straight with his right fist (clawed foot). By the time he realized that such a blow would crush a human to bits and started to reconsider, his fist was already inches away from Wataru. But Wataru instantly crouched to dodge the blow and get up close to

Ittetsu. *Oh yeah, I just saw 'im do this to Igni. This guy's good at getting up close and—*

"Heeey, Wataru! That lizard guy's a friend, don't hurt him!" Keima called out.

"Wha?! Oh, sorry!"

"Guh?!" Out went the uppercut. The fact it hit harder than anything Ittetsu would expect from a human probably had to do with his own momentum. It felt like a stake had been driven into his skull. Which, thinking about it, meant that the human's fist was strong enough to halt the full weight of Ittetsu's body and send him flying.

"Alright, Wataru! Come over here!"

"Whaaa?! B-But the dragon...!"

"Don't worry about it! C'mere! Ittetsu, you take care of the Flame Dragon!"

"Beh, guh, th-that kinda hurt... Tch, alright! Leave her to me!" *Ngh, I didn't expect a counter like that.* Not wanting to show the pathetic tears in his eyes, Ittetsu gave a thumbs up without turning around.

"Don't mess with my life! Go away, Da—"

"GRAAAAH!"

"Nghaah?!" Ittetsu gave Igni a hard hit to the cheek before she could say something incriminating.

"Why would you do that?! You jerk!"

"That fuckin' hurts! Just shut it already!" Igni was going on one of her usual rampages. The scars covering Ittetsu's body had all come from Igni. Raising children was a battle (literally), and he was used to fighting her by now.

Keima shut the door to the Boss Room. With that Hero named Wataru out of the room, Ittetsu could finally talk to Igni. He went ahead and used dragon language just to be safe.

"Heya, Igni, all awake now? Huh?"

"What're you talking about, Dad...? I'm not half-asleep or anything!"

"Hahaha! But you fuckin' threw Keima's plan into the

gutter.”

“Th-That was just... I mean, I didn’t expect Wataru to come! I promised him I’d welcome him, and he was getting into it too! Also, um, he was talking about eating my tail and everything... Squee!” Igni wiggled her massive dragon body in excitement. She was indeed the very image of a girl in love.

“Huh?! That fucker didn’t just cut your neck, he was talkin’ about that kinda junk?!” Indeed. In the dragon world, eating parts of somebody’s body carried quite a lewd connotation. It was a declaration that you would be dominating them and making them yours. Put in more simple terms, it was a proposal. Not many dragons actually chopped off and ate parts of each other, but dragon tails did regrow if only a small part was cut off, so when the eating did happen it was with tails. There was Restoration Magic, too.

“That’s not happenin’ in a million years!”

“Why not?! He just knocked your lights out! Wataru’s strong! He’s special!”

“Shut iiiit!” Ittetsu threw Igni over his shoulder to shut her up.

“Nghaah!”

“I know there’s some strong humans, alright? I get it.”

“Th-Then what’s the problem...?”

“I don’t like ‘im! My soul’s screaming at me to tell ‘im to buzz off!” Ittetsu was throwing a fatherly temper tantrum. At which point, he heard the dwarf from before — “To think you’ve got Salamander...” *Oh, crap, the door’s open. When’d that happen?*

“Hey, fuckin’ dwarf! I can hear you, and I’m not fuckin’ serving anybody!”

“Gaaah! F-Forgive me, Salamander! I, er, I meant to say to think ye DON’T have Salamander servin’ ye!” Ittetsu roared on instinct to give himself some cover. *That worked, right? Yeah, for sure.*

"Tch, we'll talk later. Igni, just be quiet and lemme hold you down."

"Nuh-uh."

"Don't nuh-uh me. Y'know our plan's been ruined 'cause of you, right?"

"I'll do it if you let me and Wataru be together."

"...Alright, I'll think about it."

"Really?!"

"Really. Oh, I'll think about it alright. So let's get this plan back on track. Sound good?"

"Okay!"

*I'm gonna think about it, but I'm sure as hell not gonna let it happen,* thought Ittetsu with a dark grin on the inside. He pinned Igni down, and it wasn't long before Keima walked in with his companions.

"Heeey, everything alright in here?"

"Yeah, just take a look. Alright! Listen up, Flame Dragon? You wanna die here or you wanna leave the mountain? Pick reaaal careful now!"

"Ngh, grrr... I-I'll leav— Mm? Mmmm? Wait, now that I think about it, you never actually said you'd accept us!" Oh no. Ittetsu's daughter, who was only sometimes smart in the weirdest of ways, began to snarl. If only she had noticed after everything was over.

"YOU TRICKED MEEEEEE!" She roared, shooting fire right at the ceiling. It looked white, a sign that she was actually pissed. Ittetsu put a hand (claw) on his head.

"Uh, Ittetsu, what's all that about?"

"My bad, Keima. Looks like I didn't get through to her. I'm gonna try and do some fist therapy, gimme whatever help you can." *We've gotta knock her out and drag her away from the mountain! I dunno how much help you'll be, Keima, but try not to die!*

## **# Keima's Perspective**

"Help me, Wataru! Destroy that Salamander!" roared Igni.

"What?!" Wataru faltered, having not expected his enemy to name him like that. The fact she called Ittetsu "that Salamander" instead of "Dad" showed she was at least still self-aware of their plan.

"Huh?! The fuck're you saying?!"

"Shut up, shut up! I saw you try to hit Wataru a second ago! I know you're going to try to hit him again once he lets his guard down around you! We were just having fun with our fight, too! Don't get in our way! If you wanna butt in, beat me first! I'll listen to you if you can beat me!" Igni exploded into a little girl's tantrum.

"Are you fuckin' for real?! Alriiight, I'll take you up on that! Let's beat the crap outta both of them! Gimme your help, Keima!" Ittetsu reacted in turn. Wataru and I felt pretty out of the loop, but...

"Okay, Wataru?! It's a truce for now! We can fight together! Don't worry, we can win if we help each other! I'll make him listen to us once we win!"

"Huh?! You'll make him, listen to us? Uhhh... Hm." Wataru, despite his hesitation, pointed his sword to Ittetsu.

"Uh, Wataru? Why are you joining the Flame Dragon's side?"

"Er, well. Because I nearly died when Salamander attacked me...? And it definitely feels like he's gonna try that again. Also, this dragon really does seem like a good one... I'm sure she'll promise not to do anything bad again once we win."

"Yeah! I promise not to do anything bad!"

"Well, there you have it."

*Oh man. Wataru the Hero is teaming up with Igni the Flame Dragon.*

"Alright, Keima! That means I can beat the human up, right? He seems pretty tough. You don't mind if I go a liiittle hard on him, yeah?"

"...Uh, could you tell me why the Flame Dragon is pissed

at you, Ittetsu? Did you touch her reversed scale when holding her down?"

"Guh?! You fuckin', what?! As if! Look, a dragon's reversed scale is kinda like, uh, a human n-nipple? It's sensitive, and like..." *Alright, I'm going to stop listening. Thanks for the information I really didn't want or need to hear.*

Incidentally, dragons were born from eggs and thus had neither belly buttons nor nipples. That was yet more useless information that Rokuko found glee in shoving down my throat against my will.

"So, why's she pissed?"

"...She, uh, she fell in love with that human." Ittetsu pointed at Wataru while whispering quietly enough that only I could hear.

"Wait, like at first sight? When did that happen? I thought she was pissed at him for cutting her neck."

"Oh, didn't I mention it? Igni was talking about how she fell in love with the human that managed to actually hurt her. So, uh..." *Okay, okay. I get it. Basically, right now... a daughter is dragging her boyfriend (?) into a fight with her dad. Good grief. I finally get what's going on and it's a disaster.*

"Anyway, so that's why I wanna beat up that Wataru guy. Gimme a hand in kicking his shit in."

"I think you have your priorities in the wrong order." I shook my head at Ittetsu. Really, I wasn't sure what to do. I needed to think over the situation first.

"...Uhhh, sorry everyone, could you go back to the small room?" I said to Gozou, Roppe, Ichika, and Niku. "This is getting pretty complex and I'm not sure what's gonna happen out here."

"Er, well, sure. To be honest with ye I'm pretty darn lost here and dunno whose side I should be on. I'm just gonna let ye take care o' this, Keima."

"Same here," said Roppe. "I feel like we'd just end up as dead weight."

"Master, I'll stay with you."

"C'mon, girl. Master's saying now's not our time to shine, we just gotta suck it up and go."

And so the four of them returned to the small room, leaving only the relevant parties behind. One dragon, one lizard, and two humans.

"Alright, the dead weight's outta the way. Let's get this show on the fuckin' road." Ittetsu cracked his knuckles.

"Uh-huh. I've been wanting to settle the score between us for a long time." Igni spread her dragon wings.

"I don't really know what's going on, but I guess I'm fighting Keima now? Let's do this." Wataru lifted his sword, full of motivation for some reason.

"Hold up, guys."

"Fuckin' why?"

"Why!"

"Why...?"

I stopped the fight, earning three confused looks from people (?) who really wanted to fight. *Uh, guys? I seriously don't get why you all want to start fighting so much.*

*Sheesh.* Anyway, I started listing out everyone's victory conditions in my head.

Ittetsu: Beat the crap out of Wataru. Enemies: Wataru.

Igni: Start dating Wataru. Enemies: Ittetsu.

Wataru: Put an end to Igni's reign of destruction.

Enemies: Igni, technically, but they're temporarily allied.

Me: Get Igni away from the mountain, temporarily, with the Hero as a witness. Enemies: None.

To add onto that... if Igni defeats Ittetsu, she'll stop destroying things due to her promise with Wataru. If Ittetsu defeats Igni, she'll have to listen to what her dad says, which also means she'll stop destroying things (around here, anyway). If Wataru gets defeated, then the father and daughter will work things out among themselves as family. In the event that Ittetsu can't calm Igni down, they'll just fight until she's satisfied.

*Alright. As far as I can tell, I end up fine no matter who wins. The best course of action here is clear.*

"I think I'm just gonna referee this. Fight!" I declared, moving to a corner of the room.

"What?! The fuck're you doing, Keima?!"

"Yeah! At least help us stop Salamander!"

Ittetsu and Wataru protested my exit from the fight, but I didn't care.

"Eeek, this is such a scary fiight. I'm just too scared to joooin. I'm just gonna sit it ooout, to be saaafe."

"What's with that monotone?! Keima, are you really backing out this late in the mission?!"

"Whoa there, Wataru. Shouldn't you be focusing on someone else?"

"Huh? Whoa!" Wataru twisted his body, narrowly avoiding a fist (clawed foot) that shot through the air where his head used to be.

"Tch, I missed."

"Salamander! Why are you even mad at me?!"

"Look inside your heart to find out, ya little punk! Hmph!" He launched another fist at Wataru, but...

"I'm not gonna let you hit him!" Igni jumped in the way and blocked the fist herself. The room shook with vibrations, as if a crate of fireworks had been set off right in front of us. *That was a pretty strong punch. I guess Ittetsu's not holding back at all. Wataru's actually gonna die if he gets hit, huh?*

"Whoa there! How am I gonna hit him if you get in my way like that?!"

"I'm telling you to stop! Ow, ow... Take this!" Igni swung her tail horizontally. But Wataru was in its path too.

"Ahhh! M-Miss Dragon?! That almost hit me!"

"Oh, sorry Wataru! That wasn't on purpose."

"Gahaha! Already having a lover's spat, huh? Perfect, keep it up!" Ittetsu caught Igni's tail and cackled with amusement at his daughter having a hard time with her boyfriend (?). *Y'know, this is actually kinda fun when you're*

*watching from a distance.*

The intense battle continued on for thirty minutes. I watched from afar, never interfering and only moving to dodge some wayward fire breath. I did have some Restoration Magic ready to cast just in case, but that was it. And I could only cast the low-rank {Light Heal} since I was {Ultra Transformed} into myself.

“Haaa, haa... Ngh, this is actually, pretty rough...!” Wataru was covered in wounds, the most hurt of any of them. Most of his damage came from Igni tackling him out of the way of Ittetsu’s blows. Also getting wrapped up in Igni’s area of effect attacks. The fact she didn’t intend to hurt him actually made things worse, since he couldn’t anticipate her attacks. Not to mention that he couldn’t go all-out in his own attacks against Ittetsu, since he wasn’t even sure why Ittetsu was attacking him.

“Ngh, fuck, and I’m hurting all over too!” Ittetsu was so exhausted he was actually spitting blood. He hadn’t landed a single blow on Wataru since Igni had protected him from every single one. Although that technically meant he was inflicting indirect damage on Wataru through Igni’s tackles, he would only be satisfied by a direct punch to the face.

“Grrr... Just a little more, just a little more...!” Igni had taken a lot of damage herself from blocking so many of Ittetsu’s blows. There was also the psychological damage from all the times she accidentally hit Wataru, but well, who really cared about that.

To summarize: All three of them were exhausted, drained of energy, and hurt all over. Any of them would fall over from the next solid blow that hit them. It was a disaster zone. And suddenly, for some reason, all three of them looked my way.

“Huh...? Y’know, you’re the only one still lookin’ fresh, Keima...”

“You’re right... I’m not so sure that’s fair, Keima.”

“Aah... Ahhh, Wataru, you... just now, you made a good

point.”

*Whoa, hold up, why are all three of them looking at me like I killed their mothers? I’m just a referee here. Not that I’ve made any rulings or anything.* All three of them had a strange glimmer in their eyes. Kind of like lions about to pounce on their prey.

“Keima, get ready!” Ittetsu charged at me for some reason.

“I’m gonna beat the crap outta you!” And Igni.

“I’ll hold back, don’t worry!” Aaand Wataru.

“Hold on, you guys! I said I’ve got nothing to do with this! I’m just the referee!”

“No sweat, Keima! This won’t be breaking the rules if there’s no referee!” I used my golem assistance to dodge to the side right before Ittetsu’s fist crashed down where I used to be, shattering the stone ground.

“C’mon! That could’ve killed me!”

“Don’t worry, I’m holdin’ back!” *You destroyed the floor!*

“GrrraaAAAAAAAH!” White flames came rushing toward me. I instinctively ducked behind Ittetsu. He stood in place to block the flames (probably realizing that they actually would kill me), but the air still got incredibly hot.

“The fuck’re you doing, you trying to actually kill ‘im?! Hold back a little more if you want him to live!”

“Wait, that was too much?!” said Igni in a dumbfounded tone after halting her fire breath.

“At least keep it red!” He was probably referring to red fire. *But, uh, fire’s still fire, that’d kill me too.*

“That means it’s my turn. Prepare yourself, Keima!” Wataru circled around Ittetsu to charge at me. *He’s swinging that sword pretty hard, is he serious about this?* I thought while using Golem Assistance to dodge. If not for the orichalcum supporting it, the reaction speed might’ve been too slow to save my life.

“Seriously, man?! Are you trying to kill me?!”

“Haha, sorry, I’m a little too tired to hold back! But looks

like that isn't a problem! I knew you were hiding your full power, Keima!" *Uh, looks like Wataru's so tired he's actually going crazy.*

"Okay, now that you know you can't hold back, how about you just take a rest? Alright?!"

"Hahaha, but I'm so full of energy!" *Oh no, Wataru's snapped. I guess having a fight with a dragon and a Salamander was a bit too heavy to escape without some psychological damage.*

"Alriiight, time for me to fuckin' get back to it! Don't think I'm letting you get away from this!" Ittetsu stood up on his hind legs and fell forward to crush me.

"Whoa, ngh, what's wrong with all of you?!" I reached out and blocked Ittetsu's fall, which was only possible thanks to my golem assistance. The weight definitely would have been too much to bear without the orichalcum, and I used Ittetsu's momentum to throw him toward Wataru.

"Whoa there."

"Not fuckin' bad, Keima!"

Wataru smoothly dodged and Ittetsu landed with his tail.

"I'll help too! Take thiiis!" I heard the heavy thumping of Igni stomping her way toward me from behind. Flames were licking out of her mouth like tongues. With her there, I was surrounded on all sides by the three of them.

"H-Hold on, isn't three-on-one a little cowardly?! At least fight me one-on-one!"

"We're all fuckin' exhausted, this is an equal fight!"

"Like hell it is! I'm just a normal guy, every single one of you is stronger than me, exhausted or not!"

"I don't think a normal guy could throw Salamander like that," said Wataru while dashing toward me. But he wasn't holding his sword, which made me realize something.

*Wouldn't just letting myself lose be the best thing here? Out of everyone here, I got the feeling Wataru would hold back the most. He had sheathed his sword, after all. I should just let him hit me and use that as an excuse to leave! I've*

*got no time and no other options; this is all I can do.*

I immediately set the plan into motion.

"I set aside my sword, just like you asked. We can fight with our fists!"

"Alright! I'll start by crushing you, Wataru! Hyaaaah!" I back stepped away from Ittetsu and Igni, drawing Wataru toward me as I assumed a fighter pose.

"Haaaaah!"

"UWOOOO— Ah."

"Wha?!"

Before I realized what was happening, my body moved on its own. I swiped Wataru's right fist with the back of my readied left hand like a first-class grappler, knocking it away. That was a move taken from Misha, Haku's subordinate and the guildmaster of the imperial capital's Adventurer's Guild. I had observed Misha training and implemented all her moves into my Wearable Golem. That was also how I had been able to throw Ittetsu like that.

"Uh."

"GUH!"

Misha's attack didn't stop with just a swipe. The mark of a first-class fighter is combining offense with defense. Swiping Wataru's hand sent his momentum to the left, leaving his face defenseless against my right fist as it slammed into his nose and sent him flying. *Whoopsie.*

"Guh..."

"W-Wataru?! W-WATARUUUU!" All the damage he had taken from Igni was just too much. Wataru sunk to the stone floor. "WATARUUUUUUUU!"

"Gahaha! Good goin', Keima! I feel a little better now!" Ittetsu cackled in amusement as Igni screamed Wataru's name.

"Crap, what've I done?! I was supposed to lose and get out of here!"

"GRAAAAH! I'll avenge you, Wataruuu!" Igni charged at me.

"H-Hold on! There's no need for us to fight anymore, right?! Calm down!"

"How dare you hurt my husband!" She seemed to be a little hysterical. But since I was {Ultra Transformed}, it might actually be a good idea to let her crush me and just revive later.

"(Master, please dodge it!)"

"Wha?!" I reflexively dodged as the voice in my head asked, dashing forward between her legs the second before a foot crushed me. I raced back to her tail, surprised at how much of an action movie movement that had been. Igni stomped through where I had been moments prior.

"Oh crap, I totally forgot about you, Kosaki."

"That's terrible, Master! I admire that you're prepared to die, but I don't want to get crushed alongside you!" The Succubus ring on my left ring finger lectured me, and I learned from my mistakes.

"Uh, Keima, is your hand fuckin' talking?"

"Uhhhh, this is one of my allies."

"That's a fuckin' weird ally. But now it's two-on-two!" Ittetsu lined up next to Igni, who had turned back around.

"Can't we just stop this already? Also, I think it's wrong to count a ring as a fighter in this." *I guess I could use Kosaki to transform into a Succubus here. Core 219 back in Tsia already knows about it, so using charms wouldn't be leaking any secrets. Maybe it could work out... Wait, no, I won't be able to use my golem assistance while transformed. And will Igni or Ittetsu even be susceptible to charms? We're talking about a spirit and a dragon here.*

"(What do you think, Kosaki? Will your charms work on them?)"

"(...I dunno, to be honest. Long-lived creatures end up with a lot of resistances. I could give a hard answer if I were possessing you, juuust saying.)" I got the powers of a Succubus Queen when possessed, but I couldn't use them recklessly. If they didn't work, I'd just be embarrassing

myself in front of everyone. But, well, I guess I wasn't in a situation where I could afford to hold back.

"(Just follow my lead, alright?)"

"(Roger dodgeeer!)" Kosaki shot back an eager reply.  
*Yeaaaah, I'm getting kind of nervous about this.*

"Hold on! This is a spirit I hired as my body guard. You can guess that she's pretty strong!"

"Huh? A fuckin' spirit? What, is she the spirit of rings?"

"No. She's the... spirit of the Darkness element? I think?"

"I'm the spirit of sleep! You're both gonna be in a world of hurt if you touch my Master! Bam-bam! Whack, smack! I bet you couldn't even see my arms moving!" Kosaki played the part of a tough bodyguard. I guess she was pretending to shadowbox. Which meant that, indeed, nobody saw her arms moving.

"...Wha? Did you do something?" Naturally, Igni tilted her head in confusion. The answer was no, Kosaki had not done something.

"Hah, so you couldn't. Dragons aren't that strong after all. If I were serious... you both would've died five times by now."

"Holy cow! You must be really strong!" *Uh, I think Kosaki's going a little bit too far.*

"(Hey, you're getting too excited.)"

"(What? I thought you wanted me to taunt them and everything. Ummm, what should I do?)" *That's what I want to know. How can we get out of this mess... Actually, is this even a mess? I guess it has given everyone time to calm down. Maybe Ittetsu and Igni will listen to me now.*

"I've never heard of any fuckin' sleep spirits. You've gotta be... Wait, sleep. Is that a Succubus? I've never seen a Succubus in a ring like that, but I wouldn't put it fuckin' past you, Keima." Ittetsu saw right through us. *Can't say I expected any less from him. Guess we've gotta force our way out of this one.*

"Heh. Alright, Ittetsu, you figured it out. But it doesn't

matter. Step down if you don't want to get charmed."

"Gahaha! I've got Redra, y'know! She'd need to be a fuckin' Succubus Queen to charm me!" *Oh, really now? That's good to know.* I gave a cocky grin.

"...And if she does have the power of a Succubus Queen?"

"Hold up, Keima. Let's talk about this. Redra's watching." Ittetsu immediately got more negotiable.

"Oh? You're scared of Succubi?" Igni sneered at Ittetsu's fear.

"Shut it, idiot! Succubus Queens are fuckin' nightmares, they're like living natural disasters!" *You think they're that bad, huh? Same here, honestly.*

"Heh... But I'm too smart for this. He said what if she has the power of a Succubus Queen, but he never said she did! In other words, he's tricking you!"

"Noooope! You don't fuckin' get it! We're dealing with Keima here, he could do anything! There's no fuckin' safe gambling with him. I've never even seen a ring Succubus before either, we've gotta be careful."

"Alright, I'm gonna use her. Here I gooo."

"Wait! Hold on, fuckin' wait, seriously, hold on!" yelled Ittetsu while taking clattering gold chains out of thin air and wrapping them around his body.

"(Hey, Kosaki. Do you know what those chains are?)"

"(Maybe... Chains of Admonition? Those are anti-charm equipment. If they're the real thing, anyway.)"

"(Alright, makes sense. I wouldn't put it past Ittetsu to have those.)" Ittetsu had, or rather the bottom floor of this dungeon had, an entire store of treasure. No reason to doubt that he would have some special chains in there. *Which means I won't be able to charm Ittetsu... Or actually, wait.*

"Ittetsu. Should a proud father really be using tools like that just to resist charms? Won't your daughter think less of you?" I taunted.

"Ngh?!" Ittetsu's lizard face twisted.

"Maybe I'm wrong since I've never been a father, but well,

I really think a father should show his daughter that he can resist charms head-on.”

“A-About that.” Ittetsu glanced at Igni.

“.....” She was giving him a look that was half disappointed (“You can’t even control yourself?”) and half hopeful (“But maybe this a trick and he can!”). Ittetsu groaned for a bit, then steeled his resolve and grabbed onto the chains.

“O-Of course I fuckin’ can! Graaah, have at meee!” *Okay, Ittetsu’s definitely a gullimander. Been a long time since I’d had to bust out that word.* After seeing Ittetsu throw aside the chains, I gave Kosaki her orders.

“Kosaki! Swap!”

“Rodger dodgeer! I hear you loud and clear! Change, Succubus Mode!” I had no idea where she learned to talk like that, but Kosaki went ahead and beat boxed transformation sounds. I then let her possess me, but well... *Yeah.* This transformation is basically ripped straight from a magical girl show.

It was too late to turn back, though, so I entrusted my body to Kosaki. No, actually. I was just swapping places with Kosaki. This wasn’t me. I wasn’t trying to turn into a magical girl. I wasn’t, and I didn’t. *Make no mistake: This is all Kosaki. I’m completely uninvolved.*

“It’s me, the Charming Girl Succuma! I’m here to steal your heart, teehee!” My body and mouth moved on their own, striking a pose. I reached out a hand, shaped it into a gun toward Ittetsu, and said “Bang!” with a wink.



“...Ngh!” Ittetsu froze up from the impact.

“...Nggggh!” And then, without saying a word, he punched himself in the face. So hard that his eyes rolled to the back of his head and he fell over. The charm was a success — or actually, more of a failure. Ittetsu had managed to knock himself unconscious before falling under my control. *Gotta say, that’s some impressive willpower. Sorry, Ittetsu, you were no gullimander after all. You were a true man. Although, you only lost because you fell for my taunting, so never mind. You are a gullimander.*

“Oof... Dad knocked himself out.”

“Huh? You’re not affecte— Ahh, okay. I see.” Igni had wrapped the chains Ittetsu threw away around herself. They were in fact anti-charm, and they seemed to be doing a bang-up job. *Y’know, if you look at this another way, you could say Ittetsu sacrificed himself to save his daughter by giving her the only anti-charm equipment he had.*

“Ummm, can I just call you Succuma? Nice to meet you!”

“Er, uh, sure.” Igni smiled at me with her dragon face. *Wait, does she think I’m actually a different person? I guess this transformation would give people that impression.*

“(Actually, what’s with the Succuma name, Kosaki?)”

“(It’s a nickname for Succubus Keima. Is there a problem?)” *Ah. Of course.* “(I was thinking about going with the Charming Femboy, but I decided to just go all the way with Charming Girl!)”

“(Yeah, I legitimately could not care less.)”

“(Darn. Oh, and by the way, I used your memories as inspiration for the transformation scene.)”

“(You can do that? Man, Succubi are crazy.)” *Can’t say I’m surprised Succubi can fish through memories of the possessed, considering they can control memories and all that already.*

My internal conversation with Kosaki was interrupted with a few sharp pokes of a claw. *Ouch, stop, dragon claws are sharp. It’s poking into me.*

“By the way, where’s uncle?”

“...Wh-Why, Keima is sleeping inside of me! Ohohoho!”

“Oh, okay! Then I can still avenge Wataru by beating you!” *Uh.* “And since you’re strong enough to beat Dad in one blow, I don’t need to hold back!”

“Wait! Igni, wait. At least take the chains off if you want to fight.”

“No way! You’ll beat me in one hit if I take them off, just like you beat Dad.” *True, but how are you gonna fight while chained up?* “Okaaaay, here I gooo! Here comes some fire breathiiiiing!” Igni started building up power! Deadly energy built up within her mouth. *This is bad. What’s bad? The fact I can already tell just touching that fire will turn me to ash.*

“If you breathe out that fire, Wataru will get hit too! He’ll die!”

“Mph?!” Naturally, Igni didn’t want that to happen. She raised her fire and unleashed it at the ceiling instead. I used that opening to find a safe spot that her fire definitely couldn’t hit — directly beneath her. That was a blind spot for her, too. She lost sight of me after I slid beneath her.

“W-Wait, where’d you go?!” Igni roared above me. Dragons were large, but that gave you an advantage if you could get beneath them — or something.

As thoughts of what my next move should be, I glanced up on a whim and noticed something off beneath her chin around her throat. A single scale was flipped around.

“(There, Master! Touch it! We win if we can touch it!)”

“(Wait, why would you think that? Won’t touching it just piss her off?)”

“(It’s a sensitive spot, remembeer? These chains may give her charm resistance, but it doesn’t seem to have any pleasure resistance! You’ll have her on the ground trembling from a single touch!)” *Seriously? Don’t blame me if you get killed from this. Wait... is my {Ultra Transformation} revival still in effect, or did the Succubus transformation cancel that? Hm.*

“(If you’re so nervous, you can just stab it. Reversed scales are famous for being the weak point of dragons. Maybe she’ll just die.)”

“(...Well, pleasure’s better than killing my friend’s daughter!)” I steeled my resolve and reached out to the reversed scale. *Take this, Succubus Touch!*

“Fwah... FWAAAAAAH?!” Igni let out a shriek like a cat, wiggled hard, then collapsed.

*...Wow. Succubus Touch is kinda crazy. It took down a dragon in one shot? Really?* I canceled the possession, feeling as if I had done something unthinkable, then walked up to Igni’s head to talk to her. She was still twitching and convulsing on the ground.

“H-Heeey, Igni. Are you okay?”

“U-Uncle... D-Did you just touch my reversed scale...?” Her eyes were filled with anger and embarrassment. Which reminded me, Ittetsu just said that the reversed scale was like a dragon’s nipples. *Oh shit, I’m a pervert.*

“No! It was Succuma who touched it, not me!”

“O-Oh, okay.” Igni looked a little relieved. I guess that was the difference between a guy touching it and another girl touching it. Succuma was technically a guy, but he looked exactly like a girl, so it was okay! *Yeah... I feel like I’m just hurting myself by saying that.*

“Anyway. Why’d you attack Wataru?”

“Wha? Well... I promised him I’d welcome him.”

I went ahead and cast {Healing} on Igni. That seemed to help her a bit.

“Just so we’re clear, Wataru definitely just thought you were attacking him out of nowhere.”

“R-Really? But he looked like he was having so much fun.”

“Weeell, I think you need to learn more about human culture and feelings.” I kept laying on the {Healing} casts. That must have been getting the alcohol out of her, judging by how much she was waking up.

“For now, you should keep your promise and leave the

mountain. You can come back in human form right after. You all ready for that?"

"Yeah! Lemme just say the line first. DARN, I LOST! I HAVE TO LEAVE THE MOUNTAIN!" roared Igni. That made my ears ring.

"Hey, come on now." I started to tell her to think about her surroundings before shouting like that, but before I could.

"Fer real...?" Someone else spoke, and I turned around to see Gozou and the others peering this way from a crack in the door.

I took a quick glance around me. The wrecked Boss Room was filled with the scars of battle. Wataru the Hero was unconscious, covered in wounds, and Ittetsu the Salamander (or just Salamander himself?) was likewise unconscious. Igni the Flame Dragon had just declared her defeat with her entire body wrapped in chains. And then there was me, entirely unhurt.

"You beat 'em all, Keima...?" Gozou looked at me with awe. *Uh... Not quite.*

"It's not what it looks like."

"Uh, but..."

"It's not what it looks like!" *You've got it all wrong! I didn't do this... I mean, I kinda did! I did hit Wataru and I did take Ittetsu down and I did defeat Igni through the seductive arts, but still! This is a mistake, a plot, this is actually all Wataru's doing! He deserves the credit!*

# Epilogue

Gozou and the others timidly entered the room, so I introduced them to the now calm Igni.

“...Err, and that’s how it went! Thanks to Wataru’s efforts! Wataru’s brave efforts! The Flame Dragon has calmed down, as you can see!”

“Grrr. I won’t do bad things anymore. I’ll leave the mountain.”

“R-Right...”

“Oh, I see... Fascinating...”

I explained to Gozou and the others exactly what had happened. I exaggerated Wataru’s involvement by about double, then claimed that Ittetsu had defeated the dragon at the cost of being knocked out. When I went to Igni (having done nothing myself), she declared her own defeat.

“It’s all thanks to Wataru that the dragon’s calmed down.”

“Um... yes, that’s right. He beat me.”

“See? The Flame Dragon’s saying the same thing. Understand? Wataru beat her.”

“...R-Right. Seems so,” said Gozou. *Whew, he believed me. Now all the fame will go straight to Wataru.*

Incidentally, Wataru and Ittetsu were still unconscious. I didn’t want to wake them up and raise the opportunity for them to ruin everything by saying the wrong thing. Letting them sleep until everything blew over was probably for the best.

“Questiooon! Why’re you doing so great?”

“Good question, Ichika. The answer is simple: I was watching the fight from a corner without doing anything! My spotless clothes are proof of that!”

“I have a question too. Master, you didn’t put on new

clothes, did you?"

"Indeed, I did not. For I did nothing." Despite emphasizing my lack of having done anything, Niku's tail and ears were wiggling with pride for me. *Don't take me doing nothing as me beating everyone without having to lift a finger, okay? I'm being real, none of this is thanks to me. I actually came close to dying multiple times.*

"Gotta say Keima, I'm impressed yer fine standing next to the dragon like that. Just being near it at all is damn scary fer me."

"Huh? What's scary about her? She said she won't do anything bad anymore."

"Right! I won't do anything bad! I'm a good dragon!" *See? Igni's learned her lesson. That's a good dragon. Very good dragon,* I thought while patting Igni's head. The scales felt surprisingly nice and smooth. And Igni was purring like a happy cat. What a cutie.

"...Er. Well, that's Keima fer ya."

"Yep, that's Keima."

"Right. You can never overestimate Keima." All three members of Team Bacchus nodded together. *Wait, when'd Wataru wake up?*

"I just woke up a second ago, but... I see you beat the dragon, Keima."

"No, no, no, no, that was all you. Man, it was crazy. You may not remember since you passed out, but you kept fighting on pure instinct after you were knocked unconscious. You were so strong and cool. The very image of a true Hero. All I did was talk to the dragon and listen to it surrender after you beat it. The credit's all yours, my friend." I piled on the praise without pausing for a counter argument.

"I remember everything up until the point you hit me, Keima."

"Whoa now, that was an accident. Just an accident. I threw out a fist in my corner and your face just happened to fly into its way. Really, my fist is the victim here. Normally I'd

sue you for damages, but considering you defeated the dragon I'll forgive you this once. No way could anyone but a true Hero have beaten that dragon, I'm impressed."

"Keima, you have a habit of talking a lot when you're trying to trick people."

"....." *Tch, just shut up and let me trick you.*

"Fghahah! Ah, w-wait, what the fuckin' hell happened...?"  
*Oh crap, now Ittetsu's awake.* I forcibly ended my conversation with Wataru to talk to Ittetsu.

"Morning, Ittetsu. Man, that Hero punch sure looked like it hurt! He completely knocked you out."

"...H-Hey, Keima! That wasn't fuckin' cool!" When I went to slap Ittetsu's shoulder, he whispered to me in a low voice nobody else could hear.

"Keep quiet about it or I'll tell Redra all about how you almost got charmed."

"...Right." *Good.*

"Man, Ittetsu, that Hero punch was like, so strong it's unfair, huh?"

"Ahhh, yeah, you're completely right. He knocked me out in one hit."

"C'mon, Wataru. Tell Ittetsu you're sorry for hitting him. It's true that you did hit him when he rushed in, remember? You should apologize for hitting him when he was unconscious too."

"Huh? Er, uh, I-I'm sorry?"

"Y-Yeah? Uhhh, y'know, I gotta apologize too..."

Wataru and Ittetsu awkwardly nodded at each other.  
*Alright, it's all settled. Incidentally, Wataru apologizing for hitting Ittetsu after knocking him unconscious was the same as Wataru accepting that he hit Ittetsu and knocked him unconscious. Back on Earth there were some scams about tricking people into paying back a single hundred yen of fake debt and using that to say they accepted responsibility for all of the fake debt, but that has nothing to do with this. Nothing at all! Hahaha.*

“...Hey. Ichika. Yer master’s blackmailing Salamander and a Hero to trick them and us.”

“What’s new, dude? He’s always doing this junk. Every second you spend worrying about it is a second wasted, my man.” *Whaddaya mean, I’m always doing this? That’s ridiculous.* I decided to ignore Gozou and Ichika’s rude side chat.

“Oh, right. You should all keep my friendship with Ittetsu a secret. I don’t want people investigating me.”

“...I can understand that, but still, I’m surprised you’re friends with a spirit this powerful.” Wataru put a hand on his chin with a thoughtful look on his face.

“What, is Ittetsu that special?” *I feel like I remember Gozou saying something similar a second ago.* Wataru went ahead and explained.

“Yeah, he is. Salamander is the great spirit of fire. It’s said that all the fire of the world has to bow its head to Salamander.” *Fire doesn’t have a head.* “Keima, have you heard of the four great spirits? There’s Gnome of Earth, Undine of Water, Sylph of Wind, and Salamander of Fire. They’re all famous. There’s also Light and Darkness, though they’re kind of different. Shade of Darkness, Will o’ Wisp of Light. You wouldn’t happen to be friends with any other spirits, would you?”

“Definitely not.” *So they’re famous, huh? I’ve heard names like that in video games before. I’m kinda surprised they were ripped straight off like that. Or maybe they’re just being translated into those names.*

“Oh, wait, what about the Spacetime element? I’m pretty sure Spacetime is an element too.”

“Spacetime is the domain of the God of Chaos. I don’t think any spirits of it have ever been recorded.” *So it’s all Leona, huh? Maybe that means a Succubus is the spirit of Spacetime, hahaha.*

Anyway, we split from Ittetsu and returned to the exit of the [Flame Caverns] at the peak of Tsia Mountain. The main differences between now and when we came were the almost setting sun, and the fact Igni (Flame Dragon form) was mixed in with our party.

...I was pretty tired from everything that had happened, and I was beyond ready to sleep. I just wanted Igni to hurry up and leave so I could do exactly that.

"Alright. Farewell, Flame Dragon. Roar loudly and shoot flames everywhere in the sky to draw attention to yourself as you fly off to some distinct mountain."

"Okay. I'll do that."

"Oh, hold on a second." I stopped Igni and looked down at Goren from the mountain peak. It was a hard journey up here, and on second thought it would be a hard journey back down. *Maybe I should ride her down? I'm sure Igni could get me there in a snap... Nah, forget it. That'd cause a huge ruckus. I'm better off just walking.*

"What's wrong?" Igni lowered her head down to me.

"Er, don't worry about it. I was gonna ask if you could take me down to town, but decided against it."

"I don't mind. Wanna get on?"

"Nah, the town would go into a panic if they saw me riding a dragon back. Which is all I've got to say. You can leave now."

"Okaaaay. Oh, can I bring Wataru with me?"

"Pretty sure kidnapping counts as something bad."

"Aw. Guess I won't, then. Oh! I forgot about this. Give it to Wataru for me." Igni tossed a ball she took out from somewhere at me. I caught it on instinct, and... *This is that dragon ball.* Just give it to Wataru yourself. I know you missed the right time to do it, but still...

"Okay, byeee!" Igni spread out her wings. Her flapping kicked up dust, but it was too little and too weak for her wings to actually lift up her massive dragon body. The fact she actually managed to fly like that was probably evidence

of her using some {Flying} skill or something.

"GRAAAAAAAAAAH!" Igni roared and shot fire into the air as she flew off in the sky. From below it looked like she was setting off massive fireworks. She spun around the mountain twice, then sped off to the southeast. The Holy Kingdom was in that direction, alongside a conveniently close mountain.

"...And there she goes." Gozou let out an exhausted murmur.

"Yep. Now all the adventurers here for the dragon will go away."

"Y'know, I thought fer sure I was gonna die. Keima, can ye actually stand right next to the dragon and not feel scared at all?"

"You were having a pretty casual chat at the end there too," added Wataru.

"I mean, why would I be scared of some girl?"  
Incidentally, Ittetsu had explained to them that Igni was a three-hundred year old girl.

"I guess that's just the kind of courage people who are friends with great spirits have."

"Haha, I could say the same to you, Wataru the Dragon Buster. Can't say I expected anything less from a mighty Hero."

"Hahaha. Well, I don't mind going with that if it's what you want." Wataru gave a broad grin. "By the way, what did she toss at you before leaving?"

"Oh, right. She said it was a present for you, Wataru."

"For me?" asked Wataru while I handed the dragon ball to him. "It's a beautiful ball... and I feel a lot of mana from it. Could this be a dragon ball? One where you get a wish if you collect all seven of them?"

"If there's seven of them, I guess there's one for each element."

"Earth, Water, Wind, Fire, Light, Darkness, Spacetime... I see."

"Either way, that'll be proof that you took down the

dragon. You should keep it.”

“Okay then. I think I will.” Wataru put the dragon ball into {Storage}. *Heh, now all the credit’s gonna go to Wataru. He’s the one who’s gonna be walking back to town with proof of beating the dragon! No matter what he says, the credit’s all his!* “But just so you know, this is the one time you won’t be able to save yourself with excuses. A legend was born today and you’re part of it, Keima.”

“Huh? You did it all yourself, Hero. The credit’s all yours. We’re just villagers who tagged along.” *No matter what rewards they try to give, I’m pushing them all on Wataru. Hence the dragon ball.*

“Everyone gets credit,” said Wataru.

“Huh? What?”

“In dragon quests, everyone in the final party that defeats the dragon gets credit and is rewarded enormously. Even if they didn’t actually do anything. I would say you’re guaranteed to get B-Rank now.”

“...Wha? Uh, that can’t be right, I’m just a D-Rank. They wouldn’t skip me ahead two whole ranks.” I glanced at Gozou. *Tell this guy off, my man. Tell him what’s up.*

“He’s right, Keima. I know ye don’t want any more work for yerself, but even Roppe and I are gettin’ B-Rank from this. Even if we tell the truth and say we didn’t do anythin’.”

“That’s right,” said Roppe. “And you might even be boosted to S-Rank if you tell the truth about what you did, Keima.” *Wait. But why? That would be skipping A-Rank too. A-Rank is a big deal!*

“Most dragon quests are completed by multiple B-Rank parties that work together and still suffer a lot of casualties. So to say, the fact we all came back alive at all is a B-Rank accomplishment at the very least. Not to mention that we did this with two parties. If we hide Salamander’s involvement, then the report will ultimately say that you and I challenged the dragon alone, and won. Add on top of that the fact that I ended up knocked out and you emerged

without a scratch, Keima, and well... that's the kind of thing top-level A-Ranks, no, top-level inhuman S-Ranks accomplish. You've stepped into the realm of Heroes, Keima."

*...I think I finally understand what a big deal this situation actually is. I've probably been underestimating just how significant dragons really are in this world. The only dragons I really know well are Redra and Igni, both of whom I can talk to casually thanks to my friendship with Ittetsu. I didn't get how threatening they are. And honestly, I still don't. If you asked me what I thought about the Dragon King, the strongest of all Dragons, also known as Core 5, I would probably just shrug and be like, yeah, I guess every faction's got it rough.*

"Not to mention," said Wataru, continuing on yet further. "There's actually a mountain of nobles that spend money to sponsor adventurers in hopes of getting some of the credit for themselves. But we challenged the dragon on our own, without any outside help. Do you understand the significance of that? Indeed. All of the credit goes to just us now. We have no choice but to share all the credit between our small numbers, Keima!" *Say... what...?*

"Okay, let's pretend I wasn't here."

"Not possible. A ton of eye witnesses saw you leaving town with us, and besides, do you think they'll let us forge a report on something this significant? They're going to use magic tools to detect lies." *Oh, crap! The lie-detecting magic tools...! Gah, crap! That's not fair!*

Wataru put a hand on my shoulder as I died on the inside. "We can hide Salamander's involvement by referring to him as your trump card as an adventurer, but you kept the town running during this whole mess, prepared for the quest ahead of time by getting that map, and you made first contact with the dragon. You actually covered for all of my mistakes, and are the one who ultimately got the dragon to surrender. On top of all that, you got the dragon ball directly

from the dragon, ordered it to leave, and sent it to a mountain on the border with the Holy Kingdom..." Sweat was running down my cheek.

"Keima... You're going to get a lot of credit for this." Bam! His statement inflicted enormous psychological damage on me.

"W-Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. Don't push all the credit on me. Why do you think I brought all of you with me?"

"...As living witnesses?"

"We didn't even do anything," added Roppe. "We're not pushing the credit on you, town chief, the credit's just yours already."

"But think about it another way. You all took it upon yourselves to join this dangerous mission. That deserves some credit. All the credit, really. Have it all! The glory is before you, just reach out and take it!"

"That's not how it works, sorry. But hey, Keima, now you're going to be a B-Rank! You get to be a noble like me!"

*The Guild knows that I have two ranks to my name. The possibility of them using this opportunity to raise my D-Rank and make both ranks the same... is very high. Grrr, I don't wanna be a B-Rank at all, much less publicly. B-Ranks are nobles. Nobles are a pain, and I know that firsthand.*

"Wataru, the dragon ball is proof of the dragon's surrender, and she gave it to you! So basically, isn't the dragon saying that you're the one who actually beat her, Wataru?" *Indeed.* The whole reason that I made the dragon ball was to make it clear who deserves the most credit. I can still get out of this!

"A fine argument. A very fine argument indeed, but... I got this ball from you, Keima. And to be honest, I didn't even hear what the dragon said when giving it to you."

"What?! Why are you trying so hard to avoid getting credit...?!"

"That's my line."

"...Okay, look, the dragon asked me to give you the ball.

I'm just a messenger! It's true and I can prove it!" *I'll force the credit on him even if I have to use a lie-detecting magic tool to do it. Now take the credit. As long as that dragon ball exists, you're gonna get more credit than anyone.*

"Sure, I don't mind making it clear I was given the dragon ball. You're not wrong about all that, after all."

I let out a sigh of relief. *Whew, I almost had all the credit forced on me. I'm glad I spent an entire night making the dragon ball instead of sleeping.*

"But, well, that won't change how much credit you get, Keima, and the fact we got this dragon ball will actually give us all more credit." *Huh?*

"Hold on a second. What do you mean by that? It sounds like not only am I still getting credit, I'm actually getting more than before."

"You are in fact getting more than before."

"I can't believe I heard that correctly..." To summarize what Wataru was saying: My credit could be represented as a score of fifty points. No matter how much extra credit the dragon ball gave Wataru, those fifty points of mine would remain unchanged. And on top of that, the ball actually gave everyone involved five extra points.

"....." Not to mention that even with Wataru getting extra points from it, I was still going to get the most credit out of anyone. *How is this happening? Why is this all going so wrong?*

"The fact you personally organized our parties and planned the mission is just that big of a deal."

"Whoa, hang on, I think the Hero who actually fought the dragon should get a little more credit than that."

"Remember, with Salamander out of the picture the story will be that you and I fought the dragon together. In other words, you're going to be a man of legend who both organized the mission and fought in it yourself." *Uh. Crap, that's not actually wrong.*

"...Could you keep quiet about that? Someone, please

take my credit." I looked around at all those present, desperation in my eyes.

"Me n' Roppe didn't do nothin'. At best we were guards on the way here. Nothin' we can do for ye, Keima."

"Mhm. And we're still going to rank up from this, so..."

*W-Well, I wasn't counting on Gozou or Roppe anyway.*

"I was totally just there as, like, a scout. You used my slave collar to pass a message and that was it, my guy." *Ngh, that's just barely not enough to split credit over. And considering the means of passing the message, that might actually just boost how much credit we all get.*

"W-Well, I-I was there for the first contact... So maybe I can take some of the credit?" Niku's eyes were full of kindness. *Alright, I'll boost Niku's involvement as high as I can.* I glanced at Wataru.

"Oh, I have to report this to Haku, so... don't expect any forged reports from me."

"Gah! You're such a cruel person, Wataru! You deserve the most credit out of anyone! You're the one who drove the dragon into a corner!"

"No, that was actually Salamander, the help you summoned. And the work of a summon is attributed to their tamer, so it all goes to you, Keima." *I forgot about that...! Curse you, Ittetsu!*

"But you landed the final hit that sealed everything, Wataru!"

"I was unconscious and don't remember anything like that. You're the one who made the dragon surrender, Keima." *Oh crap! That's also the truth!*

"Gaaah! Are you all demons?! How far will you go to force the credit onto me...!"

"Most people would be happy about this, y'know..."

"Well, it's Keima we're talking about."

"Yep."

"Yupparooni."

"Yes."

No matter how hard I struggled, I couldn't escape the despair of being given credit. *What a nightmare! At this rate I'm actually going to be known as a Dragon Buster.*

"More of a Dragon Tamer, really. The second one in the Empire's history!" *Wait, and the first one is Haku, the Ivory Goddess? Does that put what I did on the level of a god...?*

"Well, Keima, that's why I asked if you were sure you wanted to do this. Successful dragon hunts are a big deal."

"Crap... So that's what you meant?"

"I think it's good of you to worry about your town like that."

"CURSE YOOOOOOOU!" I could do nothing but slump over, defeated.

□ □ □

I hung my head for a while, but ultimately, we had to leave soon before it got dark. Traveling down the mountain was rough. If you asked what was so rough about being carried back down, well...

"The journey down should be pretty fast since we're not carrying anything back. Let's get this over with."

"Whoa, hold up, Wataru. What do you think you're doing."

"Preparing to travel down the mountain?"

"...Isn't this a cliff?"

"It's the fastest route down. We couldn't use it on the way up since it was so steep."

"Holy crap, no! This is terrifying!"

"I'll be careful. Also, you'll bite your tongue if you keep talking."

"Hey, Gozou, stop him! He wants to jump right off this cliff!"

"What're ye so scared of? The dragon was a lot worse than this. This is normal stuff, really. Ah, and yer gonna want to stop letting yer legs hang. They'll get scraped to hell."

"Seriously...?"

In the end, the journey down took only fifteen minutes instead of three hours like the journey up, but it was a lot scarier than your average roller coaster. *Okay but what was up with even Niku and Ichika sliding down the cliffs like that? Am I the weird one here? Did sitting on a chair make it scarier? I'm just glad I went to the bathroom before we left.*

We arrived in town to find Rokuko and Neruneh waiting for us at the entrance.

"Mm. Good to see you back!"

"Aaah, welcome baaack." For some reason, Rokuko was standing with her feet firmly planted on the ground and her head held up high. She must have seen Igni flying away from the mountain peak. There was a lot of fire broadcasting it.

"I thought you would be back soon. Keima, could you come here and bend down a little?"

"Huh? Why?" I got off Wataru's back, walked up to her as requested, and bent forward a bit.

"...H-Here's your w-welcome back... k-ki... nmmm! Welcome back!" *What am I, a husband getting back home from work? A married man getting home early? Of course, Rokuko was hitting me while blushing.*

"C'mon, I told you not to hit me. It actually stings a little."

"...I-I mean. Isn't it normal for a wife to want to welcome her husband when he gets home from work?" *Pretty sure we haven't had a wedding, Rokuko. We're just regular old partners.*

Putting aside Rokuko for a second, Wataru had likewise gotten called over by Neruneh. I knew they were getting closer, but not so much that she would welcome him back. Though she didn't see him off when we left.

"Sooo, Wataru? What'd you get me? Any Flame Dragon scaleees? Or maybe a hoooorn?"

"Er...! I-I, er, some stuff happened and I couldn't get anything from the dragon to bring back to you. I'm not sure

how much you'll like them, but what about some Fire Rat pelts and Red Slime juice instead...?"

"....."

"Aaah! Sorry, it's just, we made peace with the dragon and there wasn't a good time to ask for body parts!"

"Next tiime, I hope you'll bring me back something raaaare."

"I will! You can count on me!"

And so, Neruneh returned to the inn, leaving Wataru behind as he pumped himself up for next time. *Man... she's got him by the balls. Is he giving her a ton of free stuff while I'm not around?*

"Wataru. I dunno how to say this, but are you really okay with that?"

"It's fine. I actually like it, really." *Oh. Welp, he's a pervert.* "Oh, but not in like a masochistic way. She's kind of like a cat, I guess?"

"Alright. She looks like a Cat Sith to you, then."

"Do Cat Siths exist in this world?!" *Probably, I saw one in the Catalog. It was in the monster section, though.*

That was when some villagers noticed we were back and came walking over. There were about five of them.

"Hey, the town chief and everyone's back! Nobody's missing, either!"

"Oh, no dragon meat?"

"Glad to see you all safe! So, what happened?!"

They launched a barrage of questions at us.

"Er, well. We're all fine now. We managed to beat it."

"Alright. We all figured you had won when we saw the dragon flying away from Tsia Mountain, but... Huh. I know you have a Hero with you, but you actually managed to win with that few people?"

"It's kind of a funny story. Not sure how I should put it, really." I gave Gozou a light glare that said "You explain, but don't say anything unnecessary."

"...I'll just get to the point. Keima's tamed the dragon

through a crazy plot, and now this town's safe from the Flame Dragon forever."

"Wha?!"

"He tamed the dragon...? Hahaha, Gozou, now's not the time for ridiculous jokes."

"It's the truth. Ye all saw the dragon breathing fire when it flew away, yeah? That was 'cause Keima ordered it to. Right, Wataru?"

"Right. Put simply, the dragon will never threaten this town again. The Flame Dragon gave us a dragon ball as proof of its friendship." *Oh crap, neither of them understood the "don't say anything unnecessary" part. Not even Wataru. He's even taking out the dragon ball and showing everybody. I mean, sure, I made the ball for him to show off. But I intended for him to show it as proof of his own accomplishments so he gets all the credit. I don't want him to show it off like the whole team earned it.*

"Hold on a second. I didn't tame the dragon, we just made peace with it in general."

"Heeey, everyone, the town chief's a Dragon Tamer!"

"Wow, really?! That's even more impressive than being a Dragon Slayer! I'm gonna brag to everyone that he avenged my radishes for me!"

"I've never heard of any dragon balls before, but this thing's got a crazy strong aura!"

"Hold on, seriously! I didn't tame the dragon! Come on!"  
My pleas went ignored as the villagers ran off to spread news of what they had heard.

In no time at all, the whole town knew that I had defeated the dragon. Despite the fact that there were still a ton of adventurers here specifically to fight the dragon. *What's wrong with people? This is just slander. Just the worst kind of misinformation spreading.*

"Whew. Now you're definitely going to be a B-Rank at the very least, Keima. Congratulations."

"Did you plot this, Wataru?! I just want to retire!"

“Haha. They say if you’re going to eat poison, you might as well finish off the plate. Also, retiring means leaving the entire Adventurer’s Guild. I can’t recommend that.”

“...I can just quit being an adventurer and live as a normal town chief slash pope.”

“Either way, Haku’s going to summon you to the imperial capital to award you a noble title. Refusing will get you arrested for treason and executed.” *Ahhh. Yeah, Haku would do that. She would definitely do that. She executes people for treason any chance she gets. I mean, this is Haku we’re talking about. This is Haku we’re talking about!*

“Anyway, nothing but good will come from having influence outside of your own organizations. Just embrace it. Oh, and I’ll go to the capital with you. I’ll even charge less than my usual bodyguard fee.”

“I’ll go on my own terms. I can guess an S-Rank bodyguard is pretty expensive.”

“Hey, we’re friends! All you’ll have to do is pay for my passage and my meals.” *Hm... That might not be a bad deal, really. I’ve never gone to the imperial capital via the normal route, and I might as well go with a Hero guarding me. Can’t really talk about the imperial capital if I don’t even know what the way there is like.*

“Eh... Alright, if she calls me over, I’ll take you up on that offer.”

“Perfect! I’ll start getting my things. I’m gonna have to go give my report now, and I’m sure she’ll send me right back to get you. Might take until winter’s over and spring starts, though.” Wataru seemed extremely pleased. *Actually, I guess he’s just always in a good mood. Haaah... What a pain.*

“Oh. Where is Mai?” asked Niku.

“Hm? Now that you mention it...” With Niku’s help I realized Maiodore wasn’t there. I would have thought she would be with the others to welcome Niku back. My questions were answered by Rokuko.

“Mai already went to report everything to Bonodore. She’s going to tell him that you fought the dragon and won. I asked if she wanted to come with us, but she just said that she ‘believed in everyone coming home safe.’”

“...Huh? Wait, does that mean the archduke’s going to know about what we did?”

“Um, obviously? She was giving him reports about how you were handling all the adventurers and stuff too.” *Oh no.* I buried my face in my hands.

“...What? Did you think he wouldn’t learn about everything — Ohhh.” Rokuko plopped a hand on my shoulder. “You’re sleep deprived, aren’t you? It’s okay. You can rest now. We can celebrate your success over the dragon tomorrow. Okay?”

“...Alright.” I decided to accept Rokuko’s kindness and just go to sleep. Sniff.

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The next day, a party was held to celebrate the dragon’s defeat. Drinking went on for a whole day as everyone tore through the same beer we had used for the Yamata no Orochi strategy.

“An’ that’s when Keima and little Kuro went out alone to talk to the dragon. The beer they got ’er drunk with was this Dragon Killer brew!” *Don’t give it a name like that. It’s just normal Japanese beer. Sake, to be specific. And we didn’t kill the dragon.*

“So how’d the town chief and Wataru beat the dragon, anyway?”

“Couldn’t tell ye, it’s the ace up his sleeve, y’know. The one thing I can say... is that Keima was the only man standin’ at the end of it!”

“Seriously?! Wataru, you got knocked out? How’d you survive?!”

“Ahaha. Embarrassingly enough, Keima actually knocked

me out. The battle was over when I finally woke up. Oh, and here's the dragon ball. The dragon gave it to Keima before leaving."

"The town chief's amazing!" *Come on, you two! Be more secretive! Put in a little effort not to give me so much credit! Also, the dragon gave you the ball, Wataru, I just delivered it!*

"Heeey, take a look at this! It's our new Flame Dragon Beets!"

"What, it's just a red Dragon Beet?"

"Nah, I got some red chili paste from the town chief and mixed it in with the batter."

"Oh yeah? Lemme take a bite... Spicy! It's so friggin' spicy! Oh, but it tastes pretty good."

"Oh man, it really is spicy. And tasty. Goes good with this beer."

"It actually helps me chug the beer. Hey, gimme another!"

"Looks like we've got more famous food to our name now!"

"Man, the town chief sure is amazing! Cheers to Keima!"

"Cheers!" roared the table as everyone chugged beer.

"Ngh...! That should have been us! All our glory, gone...!"

"To think he'd go with an S-Rank Hero... He's got some scary connections. Also, this beer is really good."

"...I hear you can find it in this town's dungeon."

"Guess we're staying here for now."

Even adventurers from elsewhere were joining in on the drinking.

"...Hey, isn't that Wataru the Hero drinking over there?"

"Yeah, it is. I hear he was one of the fighters that took down the dragon... W-Wait, did that villager just elbow him?! Are they insane?!"

"No, it looks like they're friends! What a lucky guy..."

*Oh hey, there's a convenient conversation. Looks like these guys are from out of town. I slid my way between*

them. Naturally, I had already {Ultra Transformed} into a passing adventurer to disguise myself.

"Hey, did you guys hear? Wataru the Hero took down the dragon all by himself."

"Whoa, really?"

"Yep. He's even the one that thought of using this beer to put the dragon to sleep. Wouldn't expect anything less from Wataru."

"Yeah, same."

"But not everyone's as heroic as him. I hear the town chief's trying to take all the credit for himself. That's pretty messed up. Someone should do something about that," I said, only for the adventurer to let out a laugh.

"Heh, that's probably not true. No way would Wataru the Hero keep quiet about that."

"The truth is, Wataru owes the town chief a lot of money. He's being blackmailed."

"Hahaha, alright, I get it. I thought something was funny about all this, so lemme take a guess. You're jealous of the town chief, aren't ya? Well, listen up. If someone out there's strong enough to blackmail Wataru the Hero, they're a monster and you're better off leaving them alone." *Is this actually happening?* My best effort to spread a rumor about the town chief being incompetent ended in complete failure.

Indeed, Wataru was so trusted by people that nobody trusted a random adventurer over him. Such was the power of a Hero. But I kept on fighting to spread the rumor, at which point...

"Dude, you're the one talkin' trash about my Master, the town chief, yeah? Follow me, bud."

"Wh-What, got something to say? I ain't going with you."

"Whatever dude, you totally are!" Ichika dragged me out of the bar. She took me all the way to a deserted alley. Whereupon she —

"Master, give it up. You're not gonna change anything like this."

— saw right through my disguise.

“...How’d you know it was me?”

“Niku went ahead and told me she smelled you on your clothes.”

“That was all it took?! Ngh, I’ll need to buy new clothes this time!”

“Uh, what? You’re gonna try to pull this junk again?”

“Of course! I’m not giving up yet!”

“Kay, I’ll tell you the first reason why talking trash about the town chief’s a waste of time.” *Hold on, the first reason? There’s more?*

“Reason one! You’re the one who gave out all this beer. Everybody loves a guy giving out free beer.” *Ngh! I didn’t think about it like that...*

“Reason two! Wataru’s already telling everybody the truth.” *Curse you, Wataru!* “Reason three! Gozou’s the town’s representative adventurer, and he’s telling everybody the truth too.” *And you, Gozou!*

“Reason four! The archduke’s getting involved and telling everybody he expected you could do it, Master.” *Why is the archduke here?!* “Reason five! The fact you’re humbly keeping your achievements to yourself is making everybody trust you more.” *What. Humbly? When have I ever sounded humble?* “Reason six!”

“Alright, enough already. I get it, I’ll stop.”

“You better. You’re just gonna trash the rep of whoever you’re transformed into.”

*Grrr.* I undid my {Ultra Transformation}.

“By the way, if you keep trying to say Wataru did it all, people are just gonna think you’re even more humble. Don’t blame him, blame yourself for sleeping in and showing up late!” *This is all my fault?! To think that oversleeping would give Wataru enough time to ensure everyone knew the truth!* “So yeah, that’s how it be, my dude. If you’re feeling that garbo about it, well, I don’t mind cheering you up a little, know what I mean?”

“Nah, I’m just gonna go home and sleep...” I slumped my

shoulders. The world had been stepping all over me ever since yesterday.

"...Hmm. Oh, by the by. Rokuko was wandering around looking like she was all about drinking some Dragon Killer. Someone might be pouring her some right now, just sayin'."

"What?! I told her to quit drinking, she gets drunk so fast and she's a horrible drunk! Gaah, Rokuko, don't drink anything! You better, better, BETTER not be drinking!" I hurriedly raced into the bar. And what I found after throwing the doors open was...

"Hick! Teehee!" *I was too laaate!* There stood Rokuko with an empty mug in her hand.

"Hey! Who gave Rokuko beer?!"

"It was him."

"No, him."

"Him."

"I gave her some too, but it was him."

"Oh, should I not have?"

"Of course not! She's too young to drink!"

"Oh yeah, this happened before." *Then don't let her drink!*

"What's the problem, Keimaaaa? Eheh, you look kinda weird today. Bwuuuh?"

"Rokuko, that's not me, it's a beer barrel." Rokuko patted her hands all over the barrel. *She's already completely drunk. Again. Oh well, guess I'll just drag her to bed like last time.*

"C'mon, Rokuko."

"Hm, bed? Eheheh, going to bed with Keimaaa!"

I lifted Rokuko up. Rokuko's sweet scent filled my nose alongside her alcohol breath.

"Heeey, open up a path for the husband and wife!"

"We're not married! We're still just partners!" I fled the bar with Rokuko in my arms as people joked and whistled. Good thing I had golem assistance helping me to carry her. I didn't really want other people to see Rokuko like this.

“Waaaait, we’re not married...?” Rokuko wrapped her arms around my neck and pulled closer to me as I princess carried her.

“Definitely not yet. At the very least, it won’t happen until Haku gives her approval.”

“But we had our wedding kiss! Or... wait. Did I just dream that?”

“Hm, sounds like you probably dreamed that.”

“Then we’re a couple in our dreams. Ahaha, nmmmm...”  
Rokuko pressed her soft lips against my cheek in a kiss. I looked down at her, and she gently poked my cheek with a finger.

“Hm? Keima, your face is red.”

“...Probably not as red as yours.” *I’m not disappointed or anything! Not at all!*

Incidentally, I managed to avoid Rokuko’s clutches after getting her into bed, instead going back to my own room to sleep.

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The day after that, Igni safely returned to the [Flame Caverns]. Ittetsu called me over, and upon arriving I found Igni in her human form.

“I wanted to party too! I wanted to join the festival!”

“Shut iiiit! Why the hell would you show up to a festival about you getting beaten?!”

“I wanted to eat Flame Dragon Beeeets! And I also wanted to eat Golem Beeeets!”

“...Keima.” Ittetsu gave me an awkward look. *I hear you loud and clear.*

“Alright, I’ll get some made for you and bring them over,” I said, earning a beaming smile from Igni.

“Really?! Thanks, uncle!”

“Now quit your fuckin’ complaining. Sorry ‘bout this, Keima.”

"Bye, uncle! Promise to come again?" said Igni before leaving the room. Using dungeon functions, of course.

"Fuckin'... really sorry 'bout this."

"Hey, what are friends for? Don't worry about it." There might come a day when I needed his help, and there was nothing bad about being on good terms with your neighbor. Especially a very old and very well-informed neighbor.

"Hey, Ittetsu. You sure got hit by a lot of Igni's attacks back there. You sure you're alright?"

"Aaah... 'bout that. The fire was one thing, but all the scratches and body blows were actually fuckin' rough. I had to suck it up to show a father's pride." He had been beaten down so hard I actually got worried that he would be destroyed as a Dungeon Core.

"Huh. I thought those wounds were enough to kill you, but I guess not. I'm impressed."

"Hah! What kinda dad would let his daughter's tantrum kill 'im? Listen, more than half the scars on my body are from Igni, alright? And the rest... are from Redra..." *Being a dad sure sounds rough.*

"Funny, it seems like Igni's always just rolling around in her room and you're always flirting with Redra."

"Ngh... Don't say it..." *...Being a dad sure sounds rough.*

"Y'know, how're you and Rokuko doing? Aren't ya gonna make some kids soon?" he asked, reminding me of what Rokuko did yesterday. Not gonna lie, I blushed a little.

"Seems like things are going pretty good, huh?"

"Shut it. Got a problem with that?"

"Nah, it's the same road I went down." *Maybe, but I've got a taller wall I need to climb over first.*

"...I've gotta prepare for Haku before I can do anything like that."

"...I get ya. My sympathies, Keima. That's gonna be rough."

"Feel free to help when the time comes."

"Heh, I'll see what I can do." *Yeah. I've sure got a*

*neighbor I can trust. I think I will ask him for help if it comes down to it.*

# Extra Episode: The Game of Dragon Life

Several days after the dragon hunt was all over, I went to talk to Wataru, who was still in town.

"I made Life. Let's play."

"Huh? Life...?" asked Wataru, looking confused.

"What, you don't know The Game of Life? It's a board game where you roll dice to move pieces through spaces."

"Oh, I've actually heard of that before, I just didn't know what you meant at first."

"Makes sense. I hear a Hero introduced it here, so it must be from another world. You must not have heard of it here since it's a game for nobles."

"I see. Wait... The Game of Life is for nobles here?"

"According to Haku, yeah." The spaces in Life had writing on them, which meant only literate people could play it. The literacy rate was so low when the Hero made the game that not many commoners could play it. The paper used to make the board was expensive, too, so it never caught on with poor people.

"...But despite all that, the dice caught on at least."

"Huh. Things sure have changed." The literacy rate had grown over the decades, and now most people could read simple text. In other words, now was the time for Life to make a comeback.

"It all goes back to Wozma the vice chief, actually. He asked me to make something related to dragons to sell." Which inspired me to make a dragon-themed game of Life.

"Interesting. Did you make the pieces out of dragon claws or something, then?"

"I don't have any of those, and even if I did, I wouldn't waste them like that. We'd never make our money back no matter how many copies we sold."

"Ahhh... that's true," said Wataru while scratching his cheek.

"This is a Game of Dragon Life I made with a dragon specialist's help. It's a good opportunity to learn more about dragon customs and biology, really." Incidentally, I also made dragon Life to fulfill a second, hidden request. To spoil the twist: it all comes back to Redra. She thought it was sad that Wataru proposed to Igni by accident and that Igni hadn't noticed that he didn't feel that way for her at all. And so, she wanted me to stealthily teach Wataru and Igni the truth.

"Interesting. But why do you want me to play it?"

"Just to test it out. Your {Ultra Good Fortune} will do some work here, yeah? I want to see if you'll still have fun. That's the excuse, anyway. I actually just want to be able to say that a Hero's played it before."

"Both of those don't sound very convincing!"

"C'mon, I know you've got the time."

"Actually, I'm pretty busy with all the adventurers that want to duel me. And I mean, why not just brag that a dragon-defeating legend has played it?"

"Oh, so you will play it?"

"No, I'm talking about you." *Ngh. Wataru is surprisingly popular, really, with everyone squealing and treating him like a real Hero indeed.*

"Alright, I'll have to bait you with a reward."

"...You're not talking about credit for defeating the dragon, are you?"

"Of course not. I'd give you that for free."

"And I won't take it! The truth prevails!" *What a stubborn guy.* Having no other choice, I named another reward (the one I had been planning to name from the start).

"I'll give you a food ticket for the Dancing Doll Inn that

will let you eat with Neruneh once.”

“Very well, I’ll play.”

“I’ll also give you the credit for beating the dragon.”

“It’s time to move on, Keima. I couldn’t take the credit at this point even if I wanted to.”

I clicked my tongue and went to the parlor in the chief residence, picking up Niku along the way.

“You sure are late, Wataru,” observed Rokuko.

“There you are! I’ve been waiting!” The parlor had both Rokuko and someone else.

“Here, Wataru, let me introduce you. This is the daughter of the dragon specialist I’ve been going to. Her name’s Igni.”

“I’m Igni! Nice to see you again, Wataru!”

“Wait, aren’t you...?” *Yep, I knew you met Igni in human form before. She mentioned it to me.*

“...Wait. You have a daughter, Keima?”

“What?”

“...I mean, aren’t you the dragon specialist?”

“No way, what gave you that idea?” *The dragon specialist is Redra the Red Dragon. Maybe specialist is the wrong word for someone who is what they’re specializing in, but anyway, she helped with Dragon Life. I can promise it’s accurate.*

“I see you’re not wearing your robe today.” Indeed. Today Igni was all dressed up and, therefore, not wearing any robes. She was clearly a loli with a dragon tail growing out of her. Which meant it was time for excuses.

“Igni’s a Dragonewt. Some of her ancestors were dragons.”

“Yup! I’m related to dragons! Isn’t that amazing?!” It wasn’t a lie, either. Just like I had Japanese ancestors, Igni had dragon ancestors. Nobody said she didn’t have a dragon parent. Also, it was fair to call her a Dragonewt since her dad wasn’t a dragon and all half-dragons were called Dragonewts.

“A Dragonewt! This is my first time seeing one. I didn’t

even know they existed in this world.”

“Yep, so don’t worry about her hands or tail suddenly getting bigger, or scales suddenly growing out of her skin. She has pretty thick dragon blood in her, it causes a lot of problems.”

“Ah, subconscious dragon morphing. I understand completely.” Wataru bought it. Now I didn’t need to worry about the unlikely situation of Igni’s human morph coming undone. Though it would be bad in a lot of ways for her to go full dragon mode here.

“I’m sure a strong guy like you will make fast friends with her. Play nice, alright?”

“Sure, but we are already friends. Right, Igni?”

“We’re friends for now! Just wait until you eat my tail!”

“Huh?” Wataru smiled in confusion, but all his questions were about to be answered. “So anyway, you put on that robe to hide any horns that might’ve popped out?”

“Yeah! I would’ve been in big trouble if someone found out... Want to touch my tail?”

“You don’t mind?”

“I’m okay with you touching it, Wataru! You’re special!” said Igni while sticking out her red, crab-like tail.

“Wow, your scales are really smooth.”

“Th-That’s riiight... Nmm, you’re good at touching tails!”

“Really? I’ll take that as a compliment.”

*Alright, enough of the flirting. Let’s get this game started.* The players were me, Rokuko, Niku, Wataru, and Igni.

“Go ahead and pick whichever piece you like. The colors are different but that’s all.” I lined up the cartoonish dragon pieces I had made with {Create Golem}.

“I’m picking the red one, duh!” yelled Igni.

“I pick black,” said Niku.

“I’ll go with green, then,” said Wataru.

“I think I’ll go with white,” said Rokuko.

*Guess I’ll pick blue, then.* Once everyone had their pieces picked, it was time to start. The turn order was Wataru, Igni,

Niku, Rokuko, and then finally me.

"You don't mind me going first?"

"You're gonna roll a six anyway, so yeah."

"Feel free not to roll at all, really." Rokuko and I taunted him.

"You're both just big bullies! Here, watch me roll it! ...Six."

"Told you."

"I'm not surprised."

"Gah, stop taunting me, you lovebirds!" said Wataru while advancing six spaces. That was the furthest you could advance from the start (including the bonuses written on the spaces), so I knew for sure that Wataru's {Ultra Good Fortune} would roll him a six. His space had the following written on it: "You fall in love with a human at first sight. Advance one space."

"...Do dragons really fall in love with humans like that?"

"Wataru. There's living proof of it," I said, pointing at Igni.

"They do! They definitely do!" confirmed the dragon who had in fact fallen in love at first sight.

"Right, Dragonewts... they're proof that dragons and humans can have children." Incidentally, we were still in the younger years of the dragon's life, so the human would probably die before the dragon did. *Pretty sure there's a space later on like that.*

Wataru advanced a space. There was a rule that you couldn't skip if you didn't execute whatever was written on the space you landed on after advancing extra spaces.

"Okay, my turn!" We were reusing the same dice, so Igni picked it up and tossed it after a few shakes. She rolled a five.

"...Attack a caravan for fun. Rest one turn! Um... what's resting one turn mean?"

"Next time it's your turn, you don't get to roll a dice. Too bad."

"Awww..."

"Well, that's what you get for being a bad dragon that

attacks caravans. Right, Wataru?”

“Right.”

“...I won't attack caravans anymore! I'm a good dragon!”

Next up was Niku.

“Here I go... Three.” She advanced her piece. “You're given a tribute. Advance three spaces.” That's six total spaces. She was second place now, not bad.

“Oh, good roll, Niku. My turn...! I got three too. Weird, shouldn't I have rolled a six too?” Rokuko tilted her head as she advanced six spaces total. *Don't worry, that's fine.*

I picked up the dice... and poured mana into it. Indeed. These were the same rigged dice I used in the past to load Wataru with debt. I could make the dice roll whatever I wanted!

“One, huh? You fail to break out of your egg. The piece in the lead gets worried and goes back two spaces.”

“Wha?! Keima, what kinda messed up space is that?!”

“The game's more fun when you can mess with other players, isn't it? Hm... You're in the lead, Wataru. Time to go back two spaces.”

“Oh! Now we're on the same space, Wataru! Yay!” That left Rokuko and Niku in the lead.

“Your turn again, Wataru. Give them a roll.” I handed Wataru the dice.

From that point on, Wataru started to get suboptimal rolls, which would be natural for anyone but him. He landed on all the spaces I wanted him to. It seemed that his {Ultra Good Fortune} couldn't win against my rigged dice. Hence the turn order.

“...Two. You turn two-hundred years old. Go study abroad in [Dragon Ravine]. Advance three spaces... Study abroad, huh? That's a funny translation.”

“There are many dragons in the [Dragon Ravine], so there's a lot to learn. What's so funny about it?”

“I mean, what do they study there?”

“Mostly how to fight! Also, how to morph into human

form. You also get to meet the Dragon King! The current Dragon King is a young Black Dragon that's like, five, six hundred years old. But I hear he was an adult from the day he was born!" Igni answered entirely as if she had been there herself. I made no comment on that.

"You sure know a lot about this, Igni."

"Yeah! I'm a specialist too!" Incidentally, if Wataru noticed the significance of that, I planned to play dumb about the whole thing.

"...Four. You return to your nest after decades away. Your parent dragon greets you, then you fight. It's so fun you advance two spaces... Um, do they actually greet people by fighting them?"

"I hear that's normal for dragons. Especially fire dragons. Right?"

"It's the best time to compare fire!" Igni spoke with excited conviction, as if she had done so herself and loved it. I said nothing about that.

"That's usually how dragons welcome each other. They have a lot of fun fighting and testing their strength. You like to fight too, don't you, Wataru?"

"Er, well, I try to avoid fighting where I can help it."

"R-Really? Um, why? Isn't fighting fun?"

"I'm not sure what kind of person you think I am or why, but anyway, nah. I'm not a fan of fighting."

"O-Oh, okay... Do you like eating Magma Slimes more, then?"

"Humans don't eat Magma Slimes. At most we'll eat Red Jellies."

"I'll get some ready!" *Jellies are like the last resort for people to eat. If you asked me, he would like minotaur meat a lot more. Not that I'm going to say anything about that.*

"...Five. Morph into human form and sneak into a human town to play. Roll the dice. If you get two or less, they figure out your identity and you go back four spaces... Dragons morph into human form to go play in human towns? Oh, I

got a five.”

“Looks like you went undetected.”

“Oh, you got lucky, Wataru! You promised to only go if nobody found out your identity, so if someone did you would have been in big trouble!”

“Huh? None of that’s written on the space, Igni.” *Very strange, that.*

Rokuko and Niku were providing some support too.

“Okaaay, me next... Wow. Dragons call humans they respect little one. Anyone called little one should feel proud. The piece in last place advances two spaces... Keima, you owe me one. Move your piece and feel grateful.”

“Yeah, thanks.” As I moved my piece forward, Wataru whispered to Igni.

“...Wait, that’s respectful? How?”

“Normally they call humans dead meat or small fry, so it’s actually super polite!”

“Me next. Um, dragons calling one of the other species by their name is a sign of deep affection. Feel proud. Select one person to advance three spaces. Master, go ahead.”

“Thanks.” Indeed, calling them by their name was a sign of deep affection. They wouldn’t even care to learn the names of the humans otherwise. “Speaking of which, Wataru, didn’t that Flame Dragon call you by your name? Man, Heroes sure are something else. You’re even popular with dragons!”

“Errr, y-you think so?”

“Uncle’s right! I can guarantee that’s right, Wataru! You should be proud!” Igni beamed a smile. *Hey, those deadly sharp teeth sure are charming.*

Finally, Wataru was one step away from landing on the final tile. I poured mana into the dice just to be safe, and Wataru rolled exactly what I wanted him to.

“...Six. Saying you’ll eat their tail is a proposal in dragon culture. Roll the dice. If it’s even, advance to the marriage space...? Uhhh, I rolled a six again, so I guess I’ll go there.”

“Oh, nice going, Wataru. Whatever dice you rolled to get to the marriage space determines what species you marry. Six is for humans.”

“...Saying you’ll eat their tail is a proposal to dragons? And they marry humans...”

“Don’t be weird, Wataru! Isn’t that obviously a proposal? It’s saying you want to lay the dragon down and making their body yours, isn’t it?” Igni pulled Wataru close to her with her strong, crab-like tail. Indeed, her red tail. “And tails are sensitive! Not as much as reverse scales, but dragons only let their families and people they love touch them. Saying you’ll eat the tail has to be a proposal! What else would it be?” She wrapped her tail around Wataru’s waist. “Wataru... You should hurry up and get strong enough to eat a Flame Dragon’s tail, okay?” Igni looked at Wataru with her vertically slanted dragon eyes and grinned, showing her sharp, carnivorous teeth. She gently rubbed Wataru with her tail while letting tiny flames briefly flare out of her scales. I had told her not to outright say she was a dragon, but... she was cutting it close.

At that moment, it all clicked in Wataru’s head. There had been a mountain of hints both in the game and Igni’s explanations.

A dragon five centuries old was still young.

Dragons could morph into human form, and they snuck into human towns to play.

They welcomed each other in a friendly way by fighting.

Using names was a sign of deep affection.

Eating their tail was a proposal. They could marry humans, too.

And Igni had familiar red scales, along with familiar eyes...

“Igni! D-Did I, maybe...?!”

“Nn?!”

Wataru shot up with a clatter. Igni released him from her tail on instinct.



“What, Wataru? Did you realize something?!” Igni asked with her eyes full of hope.

“Er...” Wataru looked at Igni, and answered. “Was that Flame Dragon in the mountain your ancestor?!” Wataru’s answer was entirely unexpected. But perhaps this too was the guidance of his {Ultra Good Fortune} skill. After all, his answer was so surprising that Igni just froze instead of going on a rampage. “Oh no... I just proposed to your ancestor, Igni. Oof... I didn’t mean to do that at all, but...”

“Wataru. Sit down.” *Stop beating the dead horse already.*

“B-But, Keima!”

“Just do it.”

Igni’s mouth was flapping open and closed. *What, mimicking a goldfish? Your scales add a lot to that. But really... I guess now she knows that Wataru didn’t realize he had proposed to her. And then he did some extra damage by making her realize he didn’t even connect her with the dragon at all.*

“Well, Wataru. Let’s just keep playing. Let’s all learn more about dragons and their culture, alright?”

“O-Okay...” And so, with Wataru having landed on all the spaces I wanted him to, I stopped messing with the dice.

The end result was Wataru in first, Rokuko in second, Niku in third, and me in fourth. Igni ended up in last place, behind me even though I had spent most of my turns messing with Wataru. *Congrats, everyone. Today we are all Dragon Busters (in board games).*

“Whew, I managed to win. I’d feel pretty bad as a Hero if my {Ultra Good Fortune} couldn’t do this much.”

“Keima, you should have stalled him better!”

“Hahaha, I mean, I did step on basically all the stalling tiles. So, Kuro, how’d you like it? Was it fun?”

“Yes. Though I’m sad I lost to Wataru.”

I glanced at Igni.

“...Ngh... I-I don’t mind! I’m an adult lady that knows how to lose!” She was trembling with tears in her eyes. It was

impossible to say whether she was sad that she lost or sad that Wataru's proposal was a mistake. Maybe it was both.

"So, Keima. You're absolutely positive that everything in this game is correct?"

"I made it with a specialist helping, so yeah, I'm sure." Indeed. Everything in the game was undoubtedly true. It was put together with Redra the Red Dragon's help, after all. Unless she was lying to me, it was all true.

Though, to be fair, most of it was written with bias for the dragons to portray them as favorable. For example... if you were to take everything on it up front, then what we humans did could be described as: "Launching an unjust surprise attack on a kind neighborhood dragon that didn't even harm those that came to kill it, then tying it up despite being warmly welcomed, and ultimately blackmailing it to forever leave its home." *Man, not knowing culture sure is scary! Understanding each other is a lot harder than you think!*

...The game was pretty much propaganda, but by selling these people would probably question whether or not I deserved legendary status, and in the process, I could improve Wataru's perception of the Flame Dragon. It was two birds with one stone. Let it be a secret between you and me that I high-fived Redra after making this and ended up with a dislocated shoulder.

Whether or not my plan was successful could be answered easily by looking at Wataru's conflicted expression.

"So, Wataru. What do you think we should name this game? I think people would be more likely to accept it if it were named by a Hero who defeated a dragon."

"You defeated the dragon too, but... anyway. How about just a Game of Dragon Life?" *Yeah, that was what I was going for when I made it. Though naturally I was too lazy to bother with money or making cars for dragon kids to ride in.*

Afterwards, we cheered up Igny by playing Je\*ga while I thought about how Wataru and Igny were probably closer

now. I didn't feel like playing the board game again. That might reveal my cheating, and in a game of pure luck Wataru or Rokuko would win for sure.

"But why is Je\*ga here?"

"A Hero introduced it as a tool for helping Dragonewts master their human fingers." That's what I was passing it off as, anyway. I made no mention of the fact that I was the Hero who introduced it just a few days ago.

Days later. I had been so lazy with designing The Game of Dragon Life that people were already making copies of it. The fact that I hadn't implemented any sort of copy protection didn't help.

"Just one game board's gonna get boring. But I don't feel like making any more myself, so I say we let others make all the copies and different versions they like. Nothing wrong with more games in the world, yeah?"

"...So that's why you only made enough to sell for a few days."

"Anyone can make a copy of the original Game of Life if they have ink and paper, so yeah." This all meant, of course, that we didn't earn much money off it. Not that I had been planning to make money.

Despite all that, The Game of Dragon Life became famous as the game that brought The Game of Life back from the dead, while also being a rare source of insight into the lives of dragons... But that's another story.

# Afterword

Heya! This is the afterword to Volume 9. This is also the largest number any of the one-digit volumes will have. Eye am the strongest! Circle nine and all that. Circle nine! Yeah, I'm just having fun writing whatever, like I usually do.

I think I'll casually write my words of thanks now. I would like to give Youta-san the artist, the proofreaders, and Mister I the editor my usual thanks. I also thank all of you for still reading. It's thanks to you that I can keep producing volumes at the same pace.

Incidentally, the manga version by Nanaroku has started. There's a new chapter every month on the 25th, and chapter five will be published alongside this volume. The timing just happened to match up. I should give my thanks for that, too. I've made some mistakes while overlooking the manga (like the goblin noses), but I hope you enjoy it anyway.

Now, it seems like I've got four pages worth of afterword this time, but as always, I'm not entirely sure of what to write. I struggle with this every time. So much so I sometimes waste two, three days just writing these four pages. I wonder how much time other authors spend writing these afterwords on average? Anyway, I guess I'll talk about secret behind-the-scenes stuff.

Uhhhh, the truth is, the arc in this volume wasn't anything like the web novel's small ninth chapter. Ninety-five percent or so of this volume was original writing. I edited a lot in the second and third chapters of this volume while expanding the events quite a lot. I find it important to respect my web novel readers, but the details keep getting further apart. The end result was basically the same, though...? Kind of? There are a few changes that I'm a little

worried about, but they're close enough that I think I should be safe. I hope you agree.

Incidentally, all the wedding stuff was completely absent from the web novel. I added enough loving romance to make the story sweeter than a cream puff.

Oh, but now that I think about it, we were already in the web novel's ninth chapter by the end of Volume 8. What a world.

Putting that aside, in Volume 9 we finally got art for our beloved regular Wataru the Hero! He's kind of like Keima's rival in a way, and he got a character design plus art before he showed up in the manga, just like everybody (?) wanted. It all happened because the cute girl in love with Wataru showed up here too. In a way, Igni is kind of Wataru's savior. She's the human-morphing lizard heroine who got a design and space on the cover before her mother Redra did.

But she's still inexperienced with human morphing, so her chest and belly button aren't entirely perfect yet, but we can expect that she will work hard and improve. The problem is whether the speed of her growth will match Wataru's lifespan. This is an unavoidable problem when members of two different species are involved, and it's something Rokuko and Keima have to deal with too.

...No jokes about how his savior is a loli, or that he would be fine just being with Neruneh.

By the way, about Igni's sharp teeth and scales. Both of these were slightly inspired by a certain princess (Bowsett\*) who got enormously famous on Twitter and Pixiv in record time. The fad's already dying down, but hey. I love me some sharp teeth and a strong gaze. Redra probably looks closer to the princess in question, all things considered.

Also... I used the name Je\*gga a lot, and I sure hope it doesn't cause any problems. I am censoring it just to be safe, but well, there was just no other way to convey what I wanted. What other game is so simple, so well known, so perfect for practicing finger dexterity... Despite the

copyright I had to risk it, even at the cost of censoring letters. I just couldn't think of anything that could take its place.

Anyway, I wrote this elsewhere too, but my younger cousin got married. It turns out that her husband reads LDM, which is, uh. Is that okay? Is he okay? I'm the writer for it, but still, I gotta ask. That's actually why I included a wedding in this volume, on top of it being a good place for it. Thank you and congratulations.

...It hurts to admit, but it really taught me that writing about things you know is a lot easier than things you don't. Oh, that's not to say that, uh, my friends don't invite me to weddings or anything. It's just that none of my friends are planning any weddings. Though it is true that I don't have a ton of friends. And it is true that I have no significant other. Recruiting GF... preferably someone with an understanding of my job and tastes. Though even if I did get a girlfriend, I spend most of my days off writing and probably wouldn't be great to be around.

Sigh. I want to fall in love tooo. I want to flirt with a girlfriend tooo.

Wow, there's still a whole page left. What should I write to fill in this space...

By the way, I asked if I could put up fanart sent in from readers here in the afterword, or maybe hold like a Q&A thing like you see in magazines, but I was told no. I do want to do something special for Volume 10 though, something like a crossword puzzle. Maybe Picross? Well, who knows if I'll have enough afterword pages to do something like that.

Which reminds me. Total sales of LDM have finally passed 100,000 units. Volumes one through six got reprints with simple typo fixes and such. Maybe now I can call myself an actual writer? Can I count the manga volumes as part of the total sales of the series? Hurry up and come out.

I kinda want to bundle up all the bonus short stories and release them as their own book... alongside character design

illustrations and so on. That might happen if enough people ask for it in the online questionnaire for this volume. Oh, is this going to turn into one of those fanbook things? Those need to sell a lot to be worth it. Will it happen, or will it not... All depends on the questionnaire. You know what to do, my friends.

Anyway, I've managed to fill up all the afterword space yet again. May we meet again in the next volume.

This is completely irrelevant, but □ and 9 sure look a lot alike. Depending on the font they may even look identical.

Supana Onikage

# Bonus Short Stories

## The Feet of a Ghost

Our new dungeon ally was a Ghost. Indeed, a literal “ghost.” In Japan ghosts didn’t have feet, but in foreign countries they did. What about the ghosts in this fantasy land? I was very curious. Partially because of the whole foot fetish thing.

But in any case, to get to the bottom of what Elulu’s feet were like, I went ahead and called her over.

“You called, Master?”

“Yeah, uh, I was kinda curious about ghosts.” I glanced down at her feet and was met with a vague sort of transparency, like they were both there and not. *Hmm, I dunno. I can’t tell if I’m actually seeing them or not.*

“...Oh! Dakimakura business, I see! Don’t worry, I emotionally prepared myself for this.”

“Er, nah, that’s not it.”

“Oh. I’m at a loss, then.”

I glanced at her feet. *Are they there? Are they not? Which is it?! I mean, it feels like they are, but.... I need to get a closer look!* Suddenly, my agonizing was interrupted by her feet solidifying firmly in place.

“...Are you curious about my feet?”

“What?! How could you tell?”

“I mean, if you keep glancing like that, it’s hard not to notice. I would rather you just look at them directly,” she said before jumping into the air, sitting on nothingness above me, and thrusting her feet in front of my face. They were still slightly transparent, but they were they alright. *It’s strange. Just one second ago I could hardly even tell if they*

*existed.*

I subconsciously put a hand on them and confirmed that they were solid enough to grab.

“Hyaah...! U-Um.”

“Huh. I didn’t expect that I could touch them.” Her skin was soft and a little squishy. Her feet lacked any warmth, but they felt like any normal cold feet. *Pretty silky smooth. I like it.*

“Y-You sure are touching them. That really tickles...”

“Y’know, I thought I wasn’t supposed to be able to touch you on my own.”

“Well, it’s like, you can if I focus.” In other words, she was focusing on her feet to let me touch them.

“So my hands would go right through if you weren’t. Let’s try it.”

“Um, it’s kinda hard for me not to when you’re staring at them so much.”

“...Oh, by focus you mean like, being self-aware of your own body?” *It’s like how you can say “try not to think about how you’re manually breathing” and force people to start manually breathing. Sorry, by the way.*

“Yes. But if I focus on being more transparent, I can slide right through walls and the like.” *Oh yeah, she did stick her hands inside of people.*

So, in short, there were three stages to her transparency. She faded away when not self-conscious of her body, became physical when self-conscious, and ultimately could make herself non-solid again with extra focus. If that was all based on her ghost powers, then I could probably touch her even when she wasn’t self-conscious by focusing on her enough myself, like how Igmi and Rokuko had.

“Ummm, Masteeer.”

“Hm? What’s up, Elulu?”

“Um, h-how long are you going to keep touching my feet? I mean, of course, they belong to you and I don’t mind you touching them for as long as you like, but the rubbing is

really ticklish.”

“Oh, so you can still feel, huh?”

“Just as much as I could when still aliive, nnnm...!” *Oh yeah, she can still hear and see, too...*

“How about taste?”

“T-Taste?! How do my feet taste?! Um, well, I-I could never make my Master lick my feet! I would just die, again!” *Oh crap, I didn’t realize she’d take it that way. I was just wondering if she could taste things with her tongue.* “But, but! If you insist, Master, I wouldn’t really mind you licking my feet. Go ahead, lick to your hearts content... Suck on them, even,” said Elulu while thrusting her toes before me. Why did she look kinda happy?

*...Well, there’s a phrase about only failures of men turning women down. Nobody would judge me for licking them, right? I mean, she’s asking me to herself. And she looks happy about it.*

“What’s wrong, Master? If you don’t want to lick them, I can leave.” *Ah!* She brought me back to my senses.

“Er, well. I was actually asking if you still had your sense of taste, but.”

“.....”

“...Uh, Elulu?”

“F-F-F-F-FORGIVE ME MASTEEEEEEER!” Elulu immediately prostrated before me, so fast her head dug into the ground a little. It was fair to say that I had never seen such a power prostration before in my life, and probably never would again.

“You’ve got a surprisingly sadistic side to you, huh?”

“I’m sorry! My personality got kinda twisted because people called me surprisingly boring for an elf for my whole life!” *Yeah, sorry, I also thought you were kinda just a boring elf the first time I saw you.*

“Aaah, what a mess! I think it’s harder for me to control my emotions now that I’m a ghost, or something...”

“It’s like your spirit is on display.”

“Right! It’s like my spirit is just completely out! So please, forgive meeee!” So she said, sinking into the floor. The legend has grown deeper, literally.

Anyway, I forgave Elulu and somehow managed to drag her up out of the floor. *I’ll have to ask to lick her feet some other time.*

## **Rei the High Priestess Wants to Drink Your Blood**

(This happens before all the dragon business at Goren.)

Rei, the High Priestess of Beddhism, was actually a vampire. But in exchange for the curse of having no attack power, she had none of the classic weak points of a vampire. Even the insatiable lust for blood her species was infamous for was only a weak impulse, and could be largely satisfied by drinking water.

But that said nothing of tastes and favorites. Rei could easily live a normal life just by eating typical foods, but that didn’t mean she didn’t drink blood, and it didn’t mean she didn’t want to drink blood. Which was why she had her head slumped on the table after eating.

“I wanna drink blooooood...” Vampires were monstrous blood suckers, and with that in mind a vampire that didn’t drink blood was just a monstrous sucker. But since Rei had zero attack power on top of that, she could hardly even be called monstrous. Was she just a sucker, then? She was forced to ponder her existence to such a degree that she was close to achieving some form of enlightenment, which to be fair, was more or less what a High Priestess was expected to do.

Anyway, point being, she wanted to drink blood to preserve her self-image. She wasn’t the slave to a beastly instinct or anything like that, no. Her desire was like that of a child wanting her favorite melon roll.

"It doesn't have to be human blood. I'll even take monster blood... Oh, but not goblin blood. That stuff tastes like rotten clay, and the aftertaste is so strong it makes me want to puke."

"If rotten clay's what you don't like, how about a golem?"

"A monster without blood is out of the question. It's not like I want to eat normal clay here." Rei responded to Kinue's joke with a wave of her hands.

"What about your own blooooood?"

"...That would hurt, and I couldn't even draw blood thanks to my zero attack power." Neruneh's teasing was nothing new. "At this point I'm even willing to go for tomato juice... Actually, no, I'm not. That doesn't even make sense. The only thing they have in common is being red. It'd be better than goblin blood, at least." Rei let out a heavy sigh. "Plus, think about it. I need someone's help just to suck blood at all, even."

"Want to drink my blooooood?"

"No. I've decided to not drink the blood of my comrades." That was partially due to Rei's pride. Nothing bad would come from going against that decision, but suppose for a second that she did drink her comrade's blood once. She would want to do it again when she got thirsty again, and at that point she might be thinking of her comrade as nothing but food. That would be, in a way, betraying her Master, who viewed all of them as comrades. It just wasn't right.

"I don't really mind if you view me as foood."

"I do! Maybe if you were a goblin." All that said, Neruneh's neck really was appealing. Oh, how she wanted to drive her fangs into it. Not that they would break skin or anything.

"In conclusion, I wonder if there's any way for me to responsibly drink blood."

Kinue lifted up a quiet hand at Rei's question. "What if you healed the wounded by licking their wounds?"

"I see! That would let me drink blood under the cover of..."

Okay, no it wouldn't. Healing is done through Restoration magic." Rei the High Priestess sometimes performed healings at the church. But naturally, it would stick out if she suddenly bent over to lick the wounds.

"What if you kidnap a villager and drain them of bloooood?"

"...You're a bit evil sometimes, Neruneh, aren't you? That won't work, the villagers are Master's property." Going after travelers and merchants was no good either. They didn't want to start any rumors.

"What about animal blood? You could have Niku hunt rabbits for you."

"I don't like drinking blood from corpses. Also, animals smell gross."

"You're pretty picky, Reeei."

"...I-I mean, isn't everyone picky about their favorite foods?"

Kinue tried putting herself in Rei's shoes. Indeed, she did enjoy cleaning more when there were a bunch of nooks and crannies packed with a lot of dust.

Neruneh also tried putting herself in Rei's shoes. Now that she mentioned it, she did enjoy her research more when it demanded she use strange magic in odd ways.

"Very well, I accept your pickiness."

"Same heeere."

"Thank you, my friends." Rei exchanged firm handshakes with both of them.

"So. What should I do, then?"

"Let us consult Master."

"Agreeeeed. I'm sure Master could cook up some wonderful solution in a snaaap."

"Maybe he will gift me with a human I can kill."

"...Like a thieeeeef? That's possiblIle. I want some living bodies for experimentation tooooo!"

In any case, when in doubt, consult with your superior. Keima, Rokuko, and Ichika had all taught them the

importance of this concept.

“There are some blood packs in the DP Catalog. Want some? It’s probably human blood.”

“What?!” all three of them said together. The ease with which Keima instantly solved the problem made their loyalty for him grow only stronger. Also, after some experimentation, it turned out that RH- O blood tasted the best.

## **A Water Free Family Magma Bath**

There was a dungeon called the [Flame Caverns] in Tsia Mountain. In the corner of the bottom floor of this dungeon, there was a married couple of Dungeon Core and Dungeon Master gathered with their daughter. There rested a sea of magma. Somewhat sticky red bubbles rose along the surface while radiating so much heat that the air would hurt to look at it.

If a human was theoretically pushed into that magma, they would burn to ashes immediately and leave only bones, which would then melt in it as well. It was the perfect place to commit a murder that left no evidence, and if you asked what a whole family was doing in front of it...

...The answer would be preparing to take a bath together.

Salamander, Red Dragon, Flame Dragon. It was a family of beings made from fire that were not bothered in the least by heat that was fatal to humans. Fatal to other dragons, really, but a source of invigorating energy to them. A pool of magma was just a bathtub to them.

“Yippeeee!” yelled the Flame Dragon Igni before leaping into the pool of magma – the bathub.

“C’mon Igni! Don’t fuckin’ jump into the bath!” Ittetsu the Salamander chastised Igni, who was excited to be bathing with her family again after so long.

“Wohooooo!” Redra, in her enormous Red Dragon form, ran past Ittetsu and leapt in after her daughter.

“Seriously?! What’re you doing, Redra?!”

“Relax, Ittetsu! You jump in too! Here, I’ll even catch you!” Redra outstretched her arms to welcome Ittetsu in.

“Don’t just show your fuckin’ belly like that!” Ittetsu, embarrassed by Redra’s bold act of displaying her stomach, looked away. They were the only ones there, though, and no dragon would be peering at it with lewd intent.

“What’s the problem?! You and I are partners! Married!”

“Our daughter’s right there! What if she copies you somewhere else?!”

“Ahaha, even I would only do that with someone speciaaal. Dad, are you embarrassed?”

“What of it?! She’s my wife, I get to be embarrassed if I want to!”

“...Now you’re just embarrassing me!” Ittetsu’s reaction to his daughter’s teasing was actually touching, which made Redra flop her tail with embarrassment. Lava was sent flying everywhere.

Ultimately, Ittetsu politely stepped into the magma rather than jumping into it.

“Wheeew...”

“You’re like an old man, Dad!”

“...No, I’m not.” Ittetsu got a little depressed from his daughter’s comment. He sunk down to his head and let out a sigh. “I’ve just been busy lately ‘cause of all the invaders. Thanks to a certain fuckin’ someone.”

“You’re welcome!”

“I’m not fuckin’ happy about it. Y’know we can do just fine without invaders, yeah?”

“Awww, but what’s the big deal? It lets you do your job, and I’m the one beating them up anyway. Wait. Are you even doing any work at all, Dad?”

“I am! I’ve gotta place chests and monsters to guide ‘em around! You know how fuckin’ hard it is to not accidentally kill ‘em?!”

“Mmmm? Well, I’m still the one doing the most work!

Right, Mom?”

“Well, yeah! They’re all here for you, after all!”

Ittetsu grunted and stuck his face into the magma, blowing bubbles beneath it.

“Dooon’t poooouuut! Ahahaha, you’re so cute, Ittetsu!”

“I’m not fuckin’ pouting.” Redra swam over to where Ittetsu was and patted his head with hearty smacks. Igni thought to herself that only Mom would call her crusty old dad cute.

“...Hey, Mom. I’ve been wondering this for a bit, but why are you calling Dad Ittetsu? And where did that name even come from?”

“What, I never said? Well, you know Keima from next door, right? Turns out, humans can’t say [112] in their puny language! So he came up with Ittetsu! Apparently it means the same thing in his language or something! Fancy, huh?!”

“Yeah, it’s the language he knew back in the world he’s from, or something... Pfff.”

“So! Me and Rokuko... Ahhh, that’s our neighbor, Keima’s wife! We have tea parties, and I gotta transform into a human for them, right? Well, it’s easier to call him Ittetsu when I’m in human form! So it kinda just stuck with me! And here we are!”

“I like bein’ called [112] more, y’know...”

“Geez, I call you that when we’re alone, don’t I?! Like last night, when-”

“GAAAAH?! Y-Y-You idiot! What’re you trying to say in front of our daughter?!”

Igni didn’t get why Ittetsu was panicking, but she did think that it was nice for a husband and wife to be on good terms with each other. Also, that they sure flirted with each other a lot.

“Anyway, what’s a tea party?! It sure sounds fun! I want to go to one too!”

“Yeah?! Then you’ll have to master your human form before our next one! It’s hard to hold the cup with dragon

hands!”

“Okay! And, like, I’m already mastering it with the blocks that Uncle Keima gave me!” Igni snorted out fire breath. The temperature of the magma heated up a bit.

“Rokuko reminded me of this, but did I ever tell you how to have kids, Igni?”

“You said you would when I laid my first egg, right? I still haven’t!”

“Oh, alright! Alright! No worries, then!”

Ittetsu kept quietly bubbling the magma, unable to keep up with the conversation.

## **The Silkies**

“Aaah, so busy, so busy!”

“Hey, there’s one of the Silkies. They sure are running all over the place.”

Goren was filled with people due to the dragon. There was plenty of work to be done, and it was a daily sight to see the green-haired green-clothed little girls that called themselves the Silkies running around, hard at work.

“Aaaah, so much work to do! So busy, so busy!”

“Hey, there’s another. Another busy day for them, it looks like.” One of the Silkies ran by carrying a mountain of laundry. Did some think that she was busy precisely because she was washing by hand instead of using {Purification}? Yes.

“Okaaay, here is your delivery.”

“Right! Thanks, uhhhh, Hanna?”

“Pio.”

“My bad, my bad. Thanks, Pio.”

The Silkies were even doing deliveries, particularly to food stands. They were all busy, but they would always joyously accept any work offered to them. But only work within the town.

To be honest, the Silkies were all such devoted workers

that they even sometimes fought over who would get new jobs.

"Hold on, Nicole! You took my cleaning job, didn't you?!"

"N-No, Hanna, I'm Pio! It's me!"

"Wait, really? I must have mixed you two up."

"Maybe you did it yourself and you just forget. That's possible, isn't it?"

"...It's possible." On a whim, she asked the villager who had just been given a delivery which of them had brought it to him. "He says Pio did."

"That was just Nicole lying. Also, I think she did the cleaning herself."

The Silkies were struggling to tell even themselves apart.

But Goren was a town filled with male adventurers, and they loved the flair provided by cute little girls running all over the place. It was a nice, simple feeling. But then it happened, on one such day.

"I'll go help with the farming!"

"Bye, Nicole. I'll go serve tables."

"Hanna, good luck with your work here."

"You too, Pio. I've gotta go work over there."

The three of them gathered, then dispersed immediately. They truly were hard workers.

"...Huh? Wasn't there four of them just now?" In a stroke of bad luck, one of the villagers finally noticed.

"Hey."

"Hm? What's up?"

"The Silkies is a group of three, right?"

"Yeah, three. There's Hanna, Nicole, and Pio. What of it?"

"...Feels like I just saw four of them together."

"You must've miscounted. They all look the same."

"Yeah, maybe." Or maybe they actually were Silkies, and could duplicate using their house fairy powers.

"Well, anyway. No matter who they are, they're girls from Keima's place, so."

"...Oh yeah. Keima's involved with them. They're so

normal most of the time I forgot about that.” When odd things happened in Goren, they usually could be traced back to town chief Keima. Everyone living in town was familiar with that by now and accepted it.

However, the adventurer still decided to ask about it. He went to Keima and asked how many Silkies there were. In a normal town he would just get a confused shake of the head, but Keima looked up a bit before replying.

“Ah, well... I hired their relatives to help out for a bit, so there’s actually more than three of them now.”

“Wait. Those triplets have more family?”

“Triplets? Nah, I’m pretty sure they’re sextuplets.”

“...Wha?!” A shocking truth had been uncovered.

“That’s how they’re doing so many jobs. All of them are running around all over the place.”

“Er, well, I guess with that many siblings they’ve all gotta work to keep the family fed.” Sextuplets meant a family of eight at the very least. That would cost four times as much to feed as a normal couple of two.

“The Silkies sure are working hard. I can feel the comfylove.”

“Comf- A-Ah, right.” (Incidentally, “comfylove” was the Beddhist term for “heart-warming love”.)

“They couldn’t have asked their own relatives for help?”

“They did, and coincidentally they’re related to another set of sextuplets. That also look like them.” In one fell swoop, the triplets turned to twelve-lets.

“I dunno the exact numbers, but that should be about right.”

“...Sure sounds complicated.”

“Pretty much, but we’ve gotta hire more since we’re so busy. Hiring relatives is safe and reliable. That said, I’m letting Kinue handle all this, and I don’t know the exact number. All I know for sure is that there’s at least six of them working here.” At least six. That would explain why they could be seen all over the place. Six little girls in town, all

looking exactly the same...

.....

Well, it's fine, they're all cute. The villager decided not to think about it.

"Town chief, if there's so many of them, mind if I marry one?"

"It's not gonna happen." Keima shot down the villager's absentminded request.

"At least let me dream!"

"If you wanna dream, do it in your bed."

"You've got a point. Oyasuminasai!" The villager was a faithful Buddhist, so he decided to just get in bed and live out his dream as a dream. Though even in his dream, they all turned him down, saying "I don't really want to be with someone who would be fine with any of us."









# Table of Contents

[Cover](#)

[Color Illustrations](#)

[Prologue](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Side Chapter: A Thief Named Tieff](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Epilogue](#)

[Extra Episode: The Game of Dragon Life](#)

[Afterword](#)

[Bonus Short Stories](#)

[Bonus Textless Illustrations](#)

[About J-Novel Club](#)

[Copyright](#)



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by Supana Onikage

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